THE STORY BOOKS OF THE EARLY HEBREWS

CHARLES REYNOLDS BROWN

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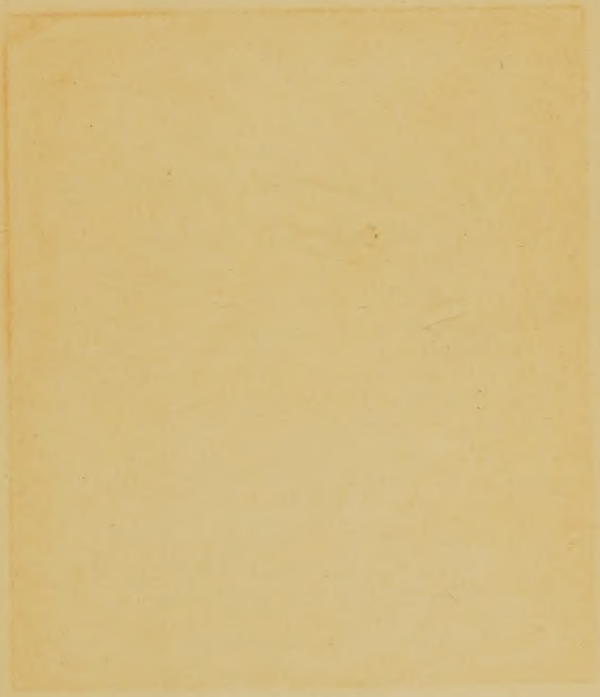

THE STORY BOOKS OF THE EARLY HEBREWS

BY

CHARLES REYNOLDS BROWN

DEAN OF THE SCHOOL OF RELIGION
YALE UNIVERSITY

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PREFACE

"He spake many things unto them in parables"—that is to say in stories. The word made flesh and moving among us full of grace and truth has still its more potent power of appeal. We are all so constituted that we live more in the concrete than in the realm of abstract principle.

I have gathered here a group of those early Hebrew narratives which belong to the period before the Exile and have sought to relate their moral content to the needs and interests of our own day. There has been no effort to shape them into a continuous record—they are snap-shots taken here and there of the unfolding history of that people which for centuries held the right of the line in spiritual leadership. The stories have value for the history of ideas even where their value for the history of literal fact may be much less important. And they are divinely profitable for teaching, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished with sound ideas and with valid motives for all good work.

CHARLES REYNOLDS BROWN.

YALE UNIVERSITY
October 1, 1919

PART I
THE STORIES OF INDIVIDUALS

THE STORY BOOKS OF THE EARLY HEBREWS

Chapter I

THE SCENE IN THE GARDEN

Genesis 3

The picture is harmonious. We find here simple, immature, primitive people living in the open. They wore no clothing at first; then only bunches of fig leaves after the manner of rude tribes in Africa; then the skins of beasts.

In this primitive life there is no mention of houses or tools or books—the agent of unholy suggestion is a serpent and a serpent is not out of place in a garden. The human will and the divine find themselves in opposition not regarding some complex interest but in a simple matter, the gratification of physical appetite by eating a certain fruit. There is no mention of vast endowments or of exalted character—all that is read into the story from Milton's "Paradise Lost"—the original picture is more accurate in that it is simple, primitive, aboriginal.

Is it history or parable, like the story of the Prodigal Son or the account of the Ten Virgins? History knows nothing of a tree whose fruit would cause men to live forever—this tree like "the spring of eternal youth" is a poetic fancy. The serpent is brought upon the scene not crawling but standing erect. He is later made to "go upon his belly" as a curse. The old Assyrian tablet shows us a man and woman naked standing

on either side of a fruit-laden tree and a serpent standing erect like a cane conversing with the woman. This was the general form of the tradition in that far-off time. But as a matter of fact serpents have always gone upon their bellies—their anatomical structure makes it impossible for them to stand erect. We are dealing here throughout with a pictorial presentation of spiritual realities.

The stamp of veracity is to be found not in literal correspondence to a particular event in the history of the race but in the fidelity of the presentation of moral truth. The narrative shows with an insight and accuracy worthy of divine inspiration the stealthy approach of evil, the peril of tarrying in its presence, the weakness of untried innocence, the danger of distrusting the wisdom underlying the moral imperatives, the shame and confusion wrought by disobedience, the final loss incurred by evil doing. It is a luminous picture of moral processes in operation every day in the year.

The earliest form of moral restraint had regard to the satisfaction of physical appetite—"Ye shall not eat of this tree." The appetites are good and the pleasure derived from the rightful exercise of them is "God's own seal of approval upon their normal use." But they need the bit and curb of moral sense. They find their honor and usefulness as they become consecrated to God.

Into every garden of delight inhabited by the undeveloped innocence of healthy appetite there comes a divine voice establishing the sense of difference between good and evil. It proclaims the restraints as well as the privileges of unfolding life. And the life enters into peace and joy, or conversely into shame and pain, as it heeds or ignores the divine voice in that garden of delight.

The first wrong counsel came in the intimation that personal liberty was curtailed by this moral sense—the serpent's word

was a taunt, "Yea, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of every tree." The wily snake, cruel, treacherous, insinuating, suggested that untaught innocence was not enjoying its privileges to the full.

The tantalizing approach of the serpent to the woman is drawn with a fine hand. It shows rare insight into human nature. The spirit of evil seems to say: "God has put lines on you, has he? You are tied to your mother's apron string. You are not allowed to enjoy your liberty in this garden of delight." It all sounds familiar as if it had been written yesterday for some untried youth making his first advent into the bewildering temptations of a great city.

The woman's first reply was sound—she indicated the broad fields of innocent enjoyment open to them and the wisdom of the restraint thrown round them for their own protection. "We may eat of the fruit of the garden but of the tree in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat lest ye die."

Then comes the lying claim of evil. "Ye shall not surely die. Your eyes shall be opened. Ye shall be as gods." More subtle indeed than any beast of the field! Is there a more insidious approach than that made by the tempter today when he insists that liberty is unnecessarily curtailed, that a bit of disobedience will not hurt. "Ye shall not surely die. You will simply have your eye-teeth cut and your eyes opened. You will be as gods possessed of a larger experience of life." The very essence of evil lies in that distrust of the validity of moral restraint.

The object offered to this natural appetite was a simple bit of wholesome fruit. The author is consistent in indicating that character is won or lost in the use we make of objects near at hand.

The woman saw that the fruit was "good for food."

It was natural for her to like it—the Creator implanted in her an appetite answering to its appeal. And the fruit grew there in the Paradise of God where he had placed these children of his love. It had to be there, for character is developed not in a moral vacuum where the possibility of evil is wanting but in the presence of that which is to be faced and refused in the interests of a higher option. The tree of forbidden fruit grew in the garden of God.

The penalty of wrongdoing did not come in terms of immediate physical disaster. The woman did not fall dead—there is no sign that the fruit disagreed with her. The enormity of evil is not to be estimated by visible consequences. The seriousness of her act lay in the fact that the will of God and the will of man stood now opposed. The spirit of rebellion had supplanted the spirit of harmonious trust. The ground of her decision lay in a contempt for the divine ideal.

The ready contagion of evil is made apparent. The plain fact that disease and sin are communicated from life to life with a rapidity and a certainty not apparent in the spread of health and righteousness emphasizes the dread men should feel regarding every form of evil. No man sinneth unto himself. The woman ate and gave unto her husband and he did eat. Their own lives were stained with disobedience and when a son was born to them he became a murderer. The moral solidarity of the race, steadily making itself felt in human experience, loads each individual with a vast responsibility.

The writer draws a vivid picture of the shame and cowardice consequent upon wrongdoing. The guilty couple felt that the old light-hearted freedom and confidence were gone—"They went and hid themselves from the presence of the Lord among the trees." Presently when the shadows began to fall "they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the

cool of the day." This was his habit when the sun had set and the fresher air of evening was abroad. They had been accustomed to meet him in glad confidence at this quiet hour but now they hid themselves and lay shuddering among the leaves.

How human it all is! The presence of moral authority, the feeling of accountability, the sense of the divine all become dreadful to the soul that has sinned. Alas that the day comes when boys and girls no longer walk unabashed and unafraid in the open!

The serpent addressed his temptation first to the more mobile temperament of the woman. The searching moral inquiry of the divine voice addresses itself first to the sense of primary responsibility which belongs to the man. "Adam, where art thou?" The excuse which comes back is a mixture of cowardice and impudence. "The woman, whom thou gavest me, gave me of the tree and I did eat." Whom thou gavest me! He would shift the load of responsibility for wrong action from his own shoulders to those of the One who had given him the fair companion of his life. And the woman questioned as to her participation in the wrongdoing passes the blame on to the serpent which God had created and allowed within the garden.

How very human it all is and how unpromising! The first note of moral recovery in that best-known parable was struck when the prodigal stood up, not laying the blame for his evil course upon an over-indulgent father who had divided the living, nor upon the looser mode of life in the far country, nor upon his boon companions, but upon himself. "I have sinned and am no more worthy." Here is honesty and here is an earnest of something better!

The ultimate responsibility cannot be shifted. Let the allowance for heredity and environment be fully adequate,

yet there comes an hour when the will of man stands at the parting of the ways able to turn to the right hand or to the left.

The penalties upon disobedience are here portrayed in terms which harmonize with the rest of the picture. There came expulsion from the garden, for the innocence of untried powers was gone. Their eyes were opened indeed, to painful, shameful phases of experience. They became not as gods but as human beings with knowledge enlarged to include the ugly and the hateful. And out into the life of struggle and sorrow they bore the marks of their rebellion against the gracious will of One who walked in their garden to minister to their joy. All these things were written in a parable for our learning and the whole sad story of moral delinquency is there portrayed.

Chapter II

THE TWO BROTHERS

Genesis 4

The compilers of this ancient book of Genesis in their selection of material were not undertaking a history of the world. The camera was not set up continuously—it was used in taking snapshots. The narrative does not flow in a steady stream but offers us brief glimpses of a process of development.

There is much to be said for the view that many of these proper names in Genesis refer to clans or tribes rather than to individuals. The characteristics of a whole group of people may have been thus summarized and pictured in the actions of individuals brought before us. The extraordinary longevity attributed to some of those patriarchs becomes less puzzling if the long life is the life of the clan. And it is just possible that the massacre of a peaceful, pastoral people by a tribe of nomads and marauders may be here represented in the violence of Cain against Abel.

The whole question is too remote and difficult for men to dogmatize. The exact historicity of the details is a subordinate question—that which is vital is the accurate portrayal of the outworking of moral principles with the consequent gain or loss in spiritual values.

The further contagion of evil is here outlined in red. In the previous chapter the hand of the woman was stretched forth in disobedience to pluck the ripe fruit—it was only a question of an apple more or less. Here the hand of her first-

born son is similarly stretched forth in disobedience and when it is withdrawn it is stained with blood. The rejection of moral restraint wisely and lovingly ordained of God issues speedily in the murderous denial of the claims of human affection. "When lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin; and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death." In the book of James the progress of evil is stated in the abstract; in these chapters from Genesis we have it in the concrete.

The mother rejoiced over her first-born—"I have gotten a man from the Lord." It may be that the uncertain promise of his early years, which issued at last in lying and murder, was such that her high hopes were dashed. When the second son is born she issues no such triumphant bulletin. The birth of Abel is not heralded as an added manifestation of the workings of a divine Providence.

"It came to pass in process of time that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord." The deep-seated instinct to placate the Unseen Powers by a gift, the purchase of good will by "backsheesh," which is not second nature but a primary impulse in the Oriental, here finds expression. And Abel brought also of the firstlings of his flock the best he had, including those portions of the fat which were tabu (they were not to be eaten by men but reserved for the gods as is made clear in the fuller narrative regarding the disobedience of the wicked sons of Eli).

And here at the very inception of worshipful observance the narrator brings out the fact that the Lord looketh not upon the outward appearance of the performance but upon the heart of it. "He had respect unto Abel and to his offering but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect." The distinction was made not on the ground of an inherent difference in the offerings themselves but because of a fundamental difference in the moral attitudes of the two men. If Cain had

been "doing well" his worship would have been "accepted," but he had not been doing well. Sin lay at his door in the act of worship.

When Cain was rebuked by him "unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known and from whom no secrets are hid," he "was very wroth," literally, "it became very hot to him and his face fell." The evil mood of his soul stood declared in his face.

"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain . . . and by it he being dead yet speaketh." By a moral attitude superior to that of his ugly brother and superior as well to the one ascribed to his parents, he gave the race a new set toward righteousness.

The Lord has respect for the hidden faith of the boy who steers his course in honor amid the temptations of a great city, taking the higher level in preference to the lower. The ultimate influence of his genuine life cannot be finally written up until centuries have passed. The Lord has respect to the inward attitude of every man who brings of his best in talent and effort that he may make an acceptable offering in terms of life to the Keeper of those values which endure. When the Boxer outbreak came and the hands of wicked men were stained with innocent blood, Horace Pitkin of Yale brought of his best in quiet, invincible loyalty to the Saviour he served and he being dead yet speaketh to the generations of Yale men who came after him.

"And Cain talked with Abel his brother"—the tenor of that conference can readily be judged by that which follows—"and it came to pass when they were in the field," unobserved, "Cain rose up against Abel his brother and slew him." And in striking fashion the narrator pictures the sequence of that act of violence. The blood of the murdered man cried from the ground unto God, calling his attention to the crime. And

the voice of moral authority promptly called the guilty man to account.

Here is the second question in the Bible! The first was, "Adam, where art thou?" And the second is like unto it, "Cain, where is thy brother?" On these two fundamental inquiries defining the sense of personal accountability to God and of social responsibility for the individual hangs the whole issue. Where art thou? Where is thy brother?

The lying, sneering, selfish answer holds the concentrated essence of inhumanity. "I know not. Am I my brother's keeper?" Here is the word of disregard for the interests of another life made flesh and dwelling among us full of lies and hate. The trader playing his own hand for all it is worth intent upon private gain at whatever cost to his fellows; the greedy manufacturer grinding up the immature labor of boys and girls in his remorseless machines that his grist of profits may be large; the shrewd politician feathering his nest with material designed to improve the lot of those he is set to serve; the cowardly prophet who counts a fat roll of pew rents more vital than the thoughtful, thorough, fearless proclamation of those social principles and ideals which belong to the coming of the reign of God in this life of industry—all these are destined to hear from One who will insist upon a definite answer, the searching inquiry, "Where is thy brother?"

We do not need to look at the back or the binding of this book, we do not need to consult an authoritative dogma of plenary inspiration to know that we have here the Holy Bible. When we discover thus early in this collection of narratives, primitive in the extreme as regards their general form, the clear presence of this insistence upon personal responsibility for one's fellows we are persuaded that these words "came not in old time by the will of man but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

The man who is careless regarding his brother's interest will be found oftentimes in the act of killing him, sometimes in a moment with a gun or an ax, sometimes in a year with a foul, unsanitary tenement which works its own form of bloodless death, and sometimes in a period of years by the maintenance of industrial conditions which eat out all joy and relish in life as with a canker, leaving the toiler to die his slow death from inward depletion and a broken heart. The question is still before the house, "Where is thy brother?" It is to be answered not with the lips but in the net outcome of the organized life we maintain.

There is a voice heard, not in the wilderness but in the crowded ways of industry, "Thy brother's blood crieth from the ground and from the unprotected, dangerous machinery of the factory and from the ill-ventilated, perilous mine and from the hazards of railroading where human safety is made subordinate to the imperious demands of high finance and from the ill-paid ranks of women and children inhumanly sweated and exploited for private gain." Thy brother's blood crieth! It seems often to have no language but a cry; its voice is broken and inarticulate. But as a protest it shows the accents of the Holy Ghost. And woe unto us if we fail to hear and to heed.

It was a bitter judgment which here fell from the divine lips upon the inhumanity of man to man. "Thou art cursed from the earth which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand! When thou tillest the ground, it shall not yield unto thee her strength. Thou shalt be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth."

There was a primitive idea that the blood of a victim would poison the soil, becoming an infection fatal to the efforts of the husbandman. This we know was fanciful, so far as any showing could be made from scientific soil analysis.

But the moral content of this ancient claim was altogether sound. The whole response made by the friendly physical order where the Creator has placed us will become a blight of disappointment to the man who makes his appeal in cruel disregard of the human values at stake in the process.

Chapter III

THE STORY OF THE FLOOD

Genesis 6-8

The composite character of the material employed in the narrative of the Deluge is clearly apparent. The compiler does not attempt to reconcile the differences as to the length of time the waters prevailed, as to the cause of the flood, or as to the number of clean beasts taken into the ark. He makes his "blend" in a continuous narrative leaving the disagreements to settle their accounts as best they may.

In the account of the flood the Priest's Code says that Noah took into the ark, "of every living thing two of every sort to keep them alive, male and female." The Yahwist says, "Of every clean beast thou shalt take *seven* . . . and of the beasts that are not clean, *two,* the male and his female." The supposition is that the larger number of clean beasts was to provide Noah and his family with suitable food during their sojourn in the ark; and also to have "clean beasts" at hand for an acceptable sacrifice on his deliverance. The Priest's Code has as yet nothing to say of "clean and unclean" beasts, for it teaches that these distinctions originated with the Sinaitic legislation.

The Priest's Code states that "the fountains of the great deep were broken up and the windows of heaven opened" on the seventeenth day of the second month and that Noah came out of the ark on the twenty-seventh day of the second month of the year following. The flood lasted more than a year, the waters prevailing upon the earth for one hundred and fifty

days, the rest of the period being consumed in the gradual subsidence.

The Yahwist states that the warning before the flood, its prevalence and its subsidence comprised but sixty-eight days. "There were seven days of warning before the rain fell, there were forty days and nights during which rain was incessant; there were three periods of seven days each which marked the gradual absorption and final subsidence of the water."

The Priest's Code ascribes the deluge not simply to the opening of the windows of heaven—"the fountains of the great deep were broken up"—a reference apparently to some terrestrial disturbance which either allowed the influx of an inland sea or occasioned an outburst of subterranean water as sometimes occurs in the alluvial districts of great rivers. The Yahwist attributes the flood simply to the unprecedented fall of rain.

The wide distribution of these flood-legends and the frequent occurrence of detailed resemblances to the Biblical narrative seem to point to a common source for them all and to the fact that some great cataclysm occasioned a deluge practically coextensive with the original seat of mankind. The tradition of the event would then be carried far and wide by the various branches of the human family in their dispersion.

The version most interesting to us is the Babylonian story contained in the eleventh tablet of the Gilgames Epic. It was discovered in 1872 by George Smith, the famous archæologist, among the ruins of Asshurbanipal's library. The hero of that flood dwelling on the Euphrates learned that the gods were to send a deluge upon the earth. He built his ship under the direction of the gods, smearing it with bitumen, and then embarked with his family and dependents, together with pairs of the domestic and the wild animals. Then the storm raged for six days and nights until all mankind were destroyed.

When the flood ceased he began to send out his birds. He sent forth a dove which returned because it had not whereon to stand. He then sent out a swallow which also returned. He then sent out a raven which ate of the carrion and saw the decrease of the waters and did not return. He then released all the animals and went forth to offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving to his gods. The interdependence of this narrative and that in our Scriptures or their derivation from a common source is at once clear.

In both of these accounts the reason given for the catastrophe was the divine displeasure over the conduct of men. Here in Genesis the bold contrast between the hero of the flood and his contemporaries is brought out. "Noah was a righteous man and blameless in his generation." But standing over against him "the earth was corrupt before God and the earth was filled with violence, for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth."

It is to the credit of that far-off time that the line should be drawn on moral grounds. Noah was not spared because he was the favorite of the gods, nor because he had been more punctilious in his attention to ritual—he found grace because he was a righteous man.

The moral limitations of the narrative appear in its utter lack of sympathy for the lost. Here are four full chapters with not one word of pity for the men and women who were wiped off the slate! Here is no word of compassion touching the sorrow of parents as they saw their children submerged or for the anguish of husband and wife torn apart by the cruel flood!

Here is no effort to warn or to rescue the moral failures! "The Lord said to Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark. And Noah went in and his wife and his three sons and their wives." And that was all! It was strictly a family affair.

Had any wicked man been entreated to forsake his way or any unrighteous man his thoughts, that he might come into the ark of safety? Nothing is said of any such effort. We are not to attach undue importance to the silences of Scripture but if during the long years while the ark was building that had been the leading thought in Noah's mind; or if it had bulked large in the consciousness of the narrator, it would surely have found mention. The desire and the opportunity for personal security seemed paramount.

How far from that whole attitude have we moved! The heartlessness of those eight people who went quietly to work to save themselves without a word of pity for the wicked unfortunates who were to be destroyed would now be impossible. Jesus could not die upon the cross and commit his soul to the Father without a prayer for the wicked men who were putting him to death. He could not enter Paradise without carrying in his arms a penitent robber, rescued in his own hour of pain. Jane Addams cannot go apart and build an ark of culture for herself and eight congenial friends—she goes down to Halsted Street where the forms of wickedness current in Noah's day are still in operation and there attempts a great, brave work of recovery.

In these days we are not intent upon saving a few souls out of the general wreck. The vast ark of safety now taking shape in the moral vision of men must house and redeem all the varied interests of this mighty, modern life. Men of moral purpose are toiling upon that vaster instrument of recovery which shall save not eight souls out of the flood of wickedness but save the race. They look ahead to the time when better moral conditions shall obtain everywhere, and God will say to every family, "Come thou and thy house into the ark."

The story of the flood closes with a divine assurance that never again shall such a catastrophe be sent upon the earth.

The bow set in the cloud was to be a sign of this covenant between man and God. The symbolism suggested possibly by the imagery of the thunderstorm is effectively employed. "The lightnings are Yahweh's arrows. But when the storm is over his bow is laid aside and appears in the sky as a sign that his anger is pacified." The lovely arch of color became thus associated in their minds with the gracious assurance that there should be no repetition of the deluge. "I do set my bow in the cloud as a token of a covenant between Me and the earth."

The bow in the cloud suggests the moral promise in dark situations. The blackness of the cloud furnished the background which enabled Noah to see the bright colors of the bow of promise. The raindrops falling from that dark cloud became the effective agent for breaking up the sunbeam into the brilliant strands which had been interwoven so deftly as to produce the effect of a clear, white light. The cloud itself, the dark instrument of the deluge, became the field whereon and the instrument whereby this radiant promise of mercy was displayed before the eyes of men.

Chapter IV

THE CALL OF ABRAHAM

Genesis 12

We cannot draw a hard and fast line in these early narratives between verifiable history and the legendary element which has more value for the history of ideas than for the history of outward occurrence. Here in these stories of Abraham we have a deposit of the ideals which had come to rule Israel's life in the later centuries. They represent what men of vision felt ought to have been the qualities of the founder of their race.

Here was the original migration which marked the inception of their history. Here was a man who left home and kindred not for the sake of military conquest nor lured by the hope of gold but upon a profound spiritual impulse. As his action stands pictured in these chapters it forms a worthy background for that great movement toward righteousness in which all the nations of the world have been blessed.

"The Lord said to Abram, Get thee out from thy country." It was a sublime test of his faith. He was summoned to a great moral venture, staking his personal advantage upon obedience to the word of his Lord. How much may lie back of those severely simple words! It may be that years of meditation and questioning, years of disgust with repulsive forms of worship in Haran, and of secret longing for a purer environment in which to rear his family, lie hidden beneath the surface of that terse sentence.

The command and the promise came hand in hand. He was to be a mediator between the God he worshiped and less favored peoples. "I will bless thee . . . and be thou a blessing." His crowning glory was to be not that of possession but of transmission. It was a call not to selfish privilege but to unselfish service.

What an anomaly the Hebrew race has been! Proud, separate, clannish, oftentimes narrow, bigoted, intolerant, yet possessed by visions and dreams of a world-wide Messianic influence. The Hebrew was eager to share with others those great ideals and that sense of the presence of the Eternal which have given renown to his history. We have the anticipation of all this in the action of that far-away emigrant leaving his own land and all the familiar associations, taking his family utterly apart, yet carrying the while his bold dream of becoming a blessing to all the families of earth.

He knew nothing of the place to which he was bound beyond that vague suggestion—"to a land that I will shew thee." He had no friends there. He carried no letter of credit drawn upon the resources of that strange country. He was moving altogether in the realm of moral faith.

He was the pioneer breaking the path for all those men of faith who have moved out under sealed orders. Unaware of the full significance of their action they have gone forth in the definite fulfillment of a divine purpose. In that spirit Abraham went out; he went west, from Ur of the Chaldees, where he was surrounded by idol worshipers, to Canaan, where he could rear his family in the worship of the one God.

In that same spirit Paul went out; he went west, crossing the Ægean from Troas in Asia to Macedonia in Europe that he might preach the gospel in that newer continent. He went out not knowing whither, all unaware of the mighty significance, of his action in carrying Christianity from the continent where

it was born into that continent where it has found its richest development.

In that same spirit Christian missionaries in the days of Augustine went out; they went west, coming from Italy to England when the latter country was still pagan.

In that same spirit the Pilgrims of England and Holland went out; they went west from Europe to America that they might here lay the foundations of the Republic in faith and righteousness. They went out not knowing whither they went —they never dreamed of the mighty development consequent upon their action.

In that same spirit men have been going out from the eastern borders of our own country to the west, carrying the same message of divine love to places of spiritual neglect on the frontier.

And in that same spirit men and women are still going—they are going west until the newer West impinges on the ancient East. Shiploads of school teachers sail out from San Francisco for their high task of education in the Philippines. Whole companies of Christian physicians, Christian teachers, Christian preachers sail out through the Golden Gate on their way to Japan and China and the Islands of the sea—an unbroken procession setting out from east to west in the spirit of moral adventure.

"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it and was glad." He saw a day wherein if a man would find his life he must lose it in service; a day when a man who would gain his own highest self-realization must "go out" not knowing whither; a day when the value of a blessing lay in the fact that the possessor of it could become a blessing to less favored lives. In that high sense this spiritual pioneer saw Christ's day and rejoiced in it.

The man who made the long migration once arrived at the

place he sought did not allow his religious impulse to lie dormant; he at once gave it outward, tangible and permanent expression. "He built there an altar and called upon the name of the Lord," uttering his own personal testimony in the midst of his people and calling upon them to share in this nobler form of worship.

How full of the sense of mystery and romance is that whole pilgrimage made by this man of faith! He went out not knowing whither! The man who goes farthest is often the man who does not know whither he is bound—if he were only going across the street or into the next town to buy and sell and get gain, he would know. In that event the returns from his quest would soon be in. But the man who goes, as Abram went, carries the mysterious and potent promise of One who walks by faith and not by sight.

But a burden of disappointment rested upon the heart of this man of faith—he had no children. How could all those hopes of continued usefulness in the establishment of a great name and the perpetuating of a noble influence be fulfilled? In the silence of the night, in the loneliness of his own tent, he cried aloud, "O Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go hence childless?"

Then comes the glowing description of an august experience. Abram is called forth by a divine voice from the curtains of his tent under the open sky.

How dramatic it is as the author condenses the vast idea into brief compass! Look up! Tell the stars! Count them! How many do you make? And when the man, doubting and depressed over the outlook touching his own life, confesses himself overwhelmed by the presence of that starry host, the strong word of assurance is whispered to him—"So shall thy seed be!"

"And he believed." Believed! The first time this great

word of faith makes its appearance on the pages of holy writ! What a part it will play! How intimately the mood it portrays is bound up with the fortunes of the righteous life! It is a word which does not dabble with the loosely held external opinions of a man's mind. The well of living water which it suggests is deep. It connotates the profoundest attitude of man's inmost soul.

Here were the three necessary conditions for a development which should be in the truest sense Messianic. The sure provision for successors in the vision and service of those ideals which had come to rule his heart; the intimate sense of the divine companionship with its implication of guidance and reinforcement; and a proper economic basis for spiritual unfolding by the guarantee of a home base of support! "I am God Almighty. Surely I will be with thee. And I will give thee the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession."

To the wondering eyes of Noah the rainbow came to have a new and deeper meaning. To the open vision of Abraham, the father of multitudes who should believe God and make their faith count for righteousness, the countless stars and the mysterious intimations of the thick darkness became prophetic of a spiritual usefulness which transcended all efforts at precise statement.

Chapter V

THE DESTRUCTION OF SODOM

Genesis 19

When the morals of Sodom became too nasty for the divine endurance, there came an intimation to Abraham that the place would be wiped off the map. The secret of the Lord was with the man who feared him.

But the wholesale destruction of an entire city seemed to this great-souled man too large an order. He drew near and said to the Lord: "Wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city! Be it far from thee to slay the righteous with the wicked. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

Well said, thou man of old! Here is the clear note of belief in a God of character struck with a bold hand! Here are the rights of men bravely urged as having a validity which even the Almighty is bound to respect!

And meeting this fearless remonstrant in the same high spirit of moral candor the Lord agreed to spare Sodom if fifty righteous men were found in it. Then Abraham, remembering that righteous men were exceedingly scarce in that wicked place, suggested that the levy of worthy candidates might fall short by five. "Wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five?" And the Lord, meeting clemency with clemency, assured his servant that he would spare the place for the sake of forty-five good men.

Further consideration, serious and accurate, heightened Abraham's solicitude as to the number of righteous who could be rounded up in the foul place. He therefore pleaded that

the figure might be fixed at forty. And these easier terms were granted by the Lord.

As the stern colloquy proceeds we see the figure dropping to thirty, to twenty and at last to ten! The Lord stood ready to spare the city for the sake of the ten righteous men who shared its life.

In this stirring dialogue, which apparently sums up in dramatic form the prolonged reflection of a good man upon the fate of evil and the deepening sense of responsibility for it as his prayers become intercessory, we note these three great truths:

1. When a man takes thought for the life of a community and begins to intercede on its behalf, his faith in the divine mercy grows by leaps and bounds. It goes from strength to strength, from figure to figure, until it senses that love of God which is broader than the measure of man's mind.

2. The disposition (not confined to men of Abraham's race) to secure as good a bargain as possible even in dealing with the Judge of all the earth is apparent. In this descending scale of figures named by the patriarch, as his prayer proceeds, we find him actually "beating the Lord down" until the price of Sodom's safety might come within his reach.

3. The growing recognition of the immense significance of a few righteous men in a community emerges. Fifty, forty, thirty, twenty, even ten would by their influence and service make all the difference between disaster and safety!

Ten righteous men would have saved Sodom! Ten righteous men well placed and with minds made up on the real issue will save any city! God never waits for majorities. He rejoices beyond measure if there is a remnant set upon the higher values—he can make it "saving." He can dismiss the fearful and careless from Gideon's army and with three hundred picked men who make some conscience of what they do,

put to flight the host of Midian. "There is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few."

The tragic fact was that not even ten righteous were forthcoming when the test came. There was Abraham himself and Lot perhaps, though his title to righteousness was less clear—it was clouded by compromising liens! Lot's own wife was not quite sure whether she wished to trust her fate with the protesting remnant or with the moral stand-patters of Sodom. When she finally set forth with the slender company of right-minded folk, she lingered and looked back until she was overtaken by fearful penalty. The meager number of righteous who would have been accepted as an offset to the frightful degradation of the place could not be mustered and the fate of Sodom was sealed.

The story of its destruction is somber indeed. Lot in the exercise of that ungrudging Eastern hospitality now become proverbial entertained angels unawares. They warned him of the terrible fate which on the morrow would befall the place. They urged him to lose no time in seeking safety for himself and for his kindred.

The words of warning sound like the swift, sharp strokes of an alarm bell by night, rousing the sleeping inhabitants from their peril by fire. "Up, get you out! Escape for thy life! Look not behind thee! Escape to the mountain lest thou be consumed!"

The thrifty Lot, who in a preceding chapter figured closely upon the relative values of fat dividends available in those cities of the Plain and the notorious morals of Sodom, still has his weather-eye out for the main chance. With the terrible rain of fire and brimstone almost at his door, he suggests some profitable arrangement with the Lord by which he might yet turn an extra penny. "Oh, not so, my Lord! Behold thy servant hath found grace in thy sight and thou hast magnified

thy mercy which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life. I cannot escape to the mountain lest evil overtake me and I die." He would temporize even when the divine judgment was within arm's length.

But he was hustled out of the place with his two daughters, sole remnant of a larger household, and when the sun rose they had reached a spot of safety called Zoar. "Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire out of heaven. He overthrew those cities and all the Plain and all the inhabitants of those cities." It was destruction, swift and terrible, complete and final.

Now what really happened? We have here no doubt what would be called in modern parlance a "homily." It is a homiletic treatment of certain facts for the purpose of moral edification. It was the Hebrew habit to give scant place to the details of any physical catastrophe but to rest the whole weight upon the moral aspects of it. The story is designed to touch the conscience with a sense of the terrible vengeance ever being visited upon heinous wickedness. The clearly ethical purpose of the narrative testifies to the presence of that faith which was the unique glory of ancient Israel—their faith in a God of character.

The author of "Genesis" in the International Critical Commentary indicates points of contact between the narrative as it stands and the outstanding features of that region about the Dead Sea. "It seems unreasonable to suppose that a legend so firmly rooted in Hebrew tradition, so full of local color and preserving so tenaciously the names of the ruined cities, should be destitute of historic foundation. It has been shown, moreover, that a catastrophe corresponding in its main features to the Biblical description is an extremely probable result of volcanic and other forces acting under the peculiar geological conditions which obtain in the Dead Sea

depression. According to Sir J. W. Dawson it might have been caused by an explosion of bitumen or petroleum like those which frequently prove destructive in Canada and the United States."

The life of Sodom was a horror—the place has given its ugly name to one of the foulest of vices. The shamelessness of the men as evinced in the conduct of those who clamored at the door of Lot's house when he entertained the strangers over night, has become proverbial—"They declare their sin as Sodom." The sure certainty that terrible disaster in some form will overtake such a mode of life is no more to be gainsaid than the familiar statements of the multiplication table.

Men often speak of "the day of judgment" as lying somewhere in the dim future. Every day is judgment day. The sheep and the goats are now being set off right and left by the searching presence of the standards and the spirit of the Son of Man. Men are entering into the joy of their Lord, into the higher privileges of human existence, as they show themselves fit and capable in body, brain and heart. Men are being sent away into the place of darkness and pain as they show themselves unfit and incapable. The judgment day, as a vast, unhurrying, unescapable process of moral discrimination, is in active operation all the while.

This process reaches now and then certain climaxes and culminations. "The day shall declare it." The badly built house does not fall down instantly nor bit by bit through all the year—it waits for the testing time. The searching experiences which show the real inwardness of a man's character may tarry for months until the hour strikes. But the day comes to declare what has been going on—and then the columns of figures written down in daily life for a series of years are added up, debit and credit, the net result written out in a bold hand on the big blackboard where all can see.

Chapter VI

THE HIGHEST FORM OF SACRIFICE

Genesis 22

"By faith Abraham when he was tried offered up Isaac." Read the story which lies back of that statement with the eyes of your heart—the eyes of your mind will not reach the meaning of it. The man who studies it in cold blood as he might study a page of trigonometry will mispronounce half the words—it is a story which can only be interpreted in the light of the affections. The hard and fast way of dealing with the various features of it has made it a libel on the character of God or a nightmare to loving parents.

Here was a man with an only son! He had other children as a result of the irregular connections prevalent in that rude world but only one real son of his love. His hopes for the future were bound up with the life of that boy. His prospects for happiness as the shadows lengthened centered in this child of his heart.

But he was a thoughtful, conscientious father. He saw around him other fathers who in their ill-advised religious zeal took their sons and offered them in sacrifice to the awful deities they worshiped. He examined himself, with regard to that affection, asking his conscience, "Do I love my God as much as do these pagans?"

As a result of this line of meditation, the awful question forced itself home: "Is Isaac mine or God's? Is my love for my child greater than my devotion to God?" And every time

he saw the hand of a father reddened in the blood of a child, every time he saw a man watching the smoke rise from an altar where a human body was being consumed, the same question came, "Do I love my God in that supreme way or do I love Isaac more? Is the child mine or his?"

The events which followed are related with simple directness. There came to this man of faith one of those commanding impulses which the Hebrew called "the word of the Lord." The impulse said, "Take now thine only son Isaac into the land of Moriah and offer him for a burnt offering." And the man obeyed. He rose up early in the morning and clave the wood and saddled the ass. He took his son and went to the place of which God had told him.

When the rough altar was built and the wood laid in place, the boy looked about with a child's wonder and said, "My father, Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb?" The father replied (and you can hear his voice break as he says it), "My son, God will provide himself a lamb." It has been said, "The stern ambiguity of the father's reply can hardly be read without tears."

The final arrangements for the sacrifice were made and the fire laid. Then this man of heroic build and sturdy faith reached for his knife to slay his son. But just there an angel of the Lord caught his hand! A voice from heaven spoke in the depths of his own soul touching a higher use to be made of that child's life. Abraham was moved to offer a ram instead, which he found near by caught in the bushes; and he took his son back to train him with a deeper sense of the sacred significance of life.

"Is this boy mine or God's?" he had been asking himself during all those months of moral struggle. His heart said, "Mine." His creed said, "God's." Both answers were true and untrue. Each answer was true in what it affirmed and

false in what it denied. The boy was Abraham's child, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, but held in trust; ultimately he belonged to the Author and Giver of life. The boy was God's child, but he could only fulfil his sonship in the divine family through the nurture and affection of his earthly home. In that hour of heart searching at Moriah, Abraham entered into a deeper understanding of the spiritual implications of human affection.

"By faith Abraham offered up Isaac." The author of these words in that noble chapter on faith in the book of Hebrews knows nothing about an incomplete transaction, a trial trip of religious faith. He says nothing about the staying of Abraham's hand or the arresting of his action by a voice from heaven. "By faith Abraham offered up Isaac."

And he is right! In the agony of that hour and in the clearer vision to which it led, the father did make his offering complete. He saw and accepted God's rights in that child. He was mercifully restrained by some better impulse, by some sober second thought which came to him at the crucial moment as a "word of the Lord," from actually slaying his child in a mistaken act of worship. But in the depths of his own soul the offering of the child's life in complete surrender to God was carried through to completion. He went down the mountain side that day saying: "This child of my love is also the child of God's love. This good gift of the Eternal must be consecrated to the highest ends."

Here, then, we find the highest form of sacrifice! This highest form is not to be found in an act of destruction but in an act of consecration. It is written, "If thy right hand cause thee to offend, cut it off." It is better to enter into life maimed than having two hands to steal with them or forge with them. "If thy right foot cause thee to offend, cut it off." It is better to enter into life without feet and sit down for the

rest of one's days than having two feet to walk with swinging step in paths of evil.

But this does not exhaust the possible options. "Better" indeed but beyond that better there stands a third option which is "best." Degradation is the worst use which can be made of any faculty—mutilation is "better" than that. But "best" of all is the consecration of the faculty, the right hand, the right foot, the right eye, to worthy use. In that event the man "enters into life" not maimed but sound and whole. Here we find sacrifice in its best estate. It comes not to destroy but to fulfill.

And this was the great lesson which Abraham learned in that testing of his faith which reached its climax in the scene at Moriah. The degradation of the son's life through the favoritism and petting of an indulgent father until the boy should be lacking in moral fiber would have been a tragedy. Better the mutilation of his own parental affection, better the cutting off of the boy's life than such moral degradation of it. But best of all would be the discovery of the deeper meaning of human affection through the consecration of a beautiful relationship to the holiest ends. "The essence of sacrifice lies in the moral disposition" which prompts the outward act. "Thou delightest not in burnt offering; the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

This deeper meaning of the incident belongs to the spiritual insight of a much later period finding expression in the psalms and the prophets and still more in the treatment given in the book of Hebrews. It is to be noted that the story as it stands in Genesis contains no word of condemnation regarding the practice of human sacrifice. It may be that the original story found its place in that tradition which undertook to explain the substitution of animal for human sacrifices in the ancient

Hebrew cult of worship. But we are warranted in viewing it in the light of the day which was then just dawning.

When the patriarch was brought face to face with the terrible trial, the narrative indicates a certain almost sub-conscious trust in the divine mercy. When they drew near to the place appointed for the offering Abraham left his servants behind, going forward with the child alone that there might be no unsympathetic witness of his agony—"they went both of them together." And his direction to the servants has in it an undertone of hope—"Abraham said to his young men, Abide ye here with the ass and I and the lad will go yonder and worship and come again to you."

"Mark the promise to come again! 'We will come again,' said Abraham when the very earth was reeling under his feet. 'God will provide himself a lamb,' he said, when the appointed victim was walking at his side. All this is true to life as we ourselves know it. We have said these very words. Terrible as the storm may be, yet far away in some dim chamber of the heart an angel is singing softly of hope and light and rest."

"Abraham offered up Isaac." Not a drop of the child's blood was spilled, yet he was "offered." The father's hand and history were not stained by a deed of murder, yet his offering there at Moriah was complete. It was the offering of consecration. The boy's life was to find wider uses than that of ministering to personal pride and joy in the heart of a sheik. His life was to be adjusted to higher and vaster uses as it became related to a great movement of faith in which all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

Let each man bring his choicest gifts up to Mt. Moriah! His sound health is not for careless, pleasurable self-indulgence nor for neglect or destruction by false asceticism. He is to present it a living, holy, acceptable offering unto God. Intellectual vigor is not to be kept for pride of personal

achievement nor is it to be destroyed by ill-advised mental mortification. It is to rise to its full stature that it may have the more to lay at the feet of God in useful service. And moral superiority is not to minister to Pharisaical self-satisfaction nor to be flung away in careless Bohemianism. It is be laid on the high altar of usefulness, finding its complete realization in aiding those who suffer moral defeat.

Chapter VII

THE CHOICE OF A WIFE

Genesis 24

Here is a love story pure and simple! The call is not for exegesis or exhortation—the fussy commentator is asked to stand aside that the story may look into the faces of the people and tell itself.

"Abraham was old and well stricken in age," yet he takes thought for his son's wife. His own domestic relations had brought him some measure of happiness and a large measure of experience. He feels himself competent therefore to offer a friendly hint which may not prove amiss. He calls his oldest house-servant and with the peculiar ceremony which Orientals use in emphasizing the sacredness of an oath, adjures him not to allow Isaac to become entangled with some bold-faced maiden among the Canaanites but to seek out a young woman of Hebrew blood among his kindred in distant Mesopotamia. His own experience with Hagar, the mocking Egyptian girl, inclined him to keep his son free from any such pagan alliance.

The character of the servant shines with a simple, old-fashioned beauty. He is a servant and a gentleman, contradictory as the terms might sound to some rude ears. He shows us a satisfying blend of dignity and humility, of well-seasoned sagacity in the execution of his tasks and of gracious courtesy smoothing the way for all hands. "The office of a servant in these democratic days is not that to which we aspire but it is, after all, that in which we must succeed if we succeed at all. If not servants of an employer, as many must be, we are ser-

vants of our constituents, our patrons, our institution, our cause, of the public, of humanity, of God. The patience and toil, the temper and good will that go to make a perfect servant are fine and honorable things; they equip one for a function of which none need be ashamed, which blesses the world beyond all others and makes us fellows of Him who came not to be ministered unto but to minister."

He has acquired insight into human nature as servants do who "look unto the hand of their masters." When he is commissioned to visit a distant land to bring back a wife for his young master, he expresses some solicitude as to her willingness to take the long journey to be espoused by a man she has never seen. Marriageable young women are not always tractable. She may insist on seeing her prospective lord before accepting his addresses. "Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me. Must I needs bring thy son?" But Abraham will not have Isaac taken into that far-away perilous country. He insists that "the Lord God of heaven will send his angel" before the steward to prepare the way and to overcome the reluctance of the young woman.

The elderly servant believed in "the Lord God of heaven," too; he was a man of lovely piety as appears later, but he felt that a beneficent Providence would not take it amiss if wise precautions were taken to further its ends. He saw to it that he should appear at the door of that young lady in the foreign land well equipped. "He took ten camels"—more than would be actually needed to bring back the bride—"of the camels of his master, having all good things of his master's in his hand." He saw to it that the matrimonial expedition should not fail for lack of suitable equipment.

He took with him a plentiful supply of jewelry, with the idea that the feminine mind is not altogether indifferent to such allurements. He took "jewels of silver and jewels of

gold, rings and bracelets" and other gewgaws. When he first met the young lady, before acquainting her with the object of his errand, "He took a gold ring of half a shekel weight and two bracelets for her hands of ten shekels weight of gold" and gave them to her, with the feeling that this might encourage an open mind toward his proposals. It is all very human.

And that these overtures were not without effect is frankly stated. "It came to pass when Laban saw the ring and the bracelets on his sister's hands, he said: 'Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without? I have prepared the house and room for thy camels.' " His own facility in the exercise of Eastern hospitality was quickened by what he saw of generous prosperity on the part of the would-be guest. It is entirely human.

And the servant introduced the important matter in hand by an incidental reference to the fact that his master was in very comfortable circumstances. The prospective daughter-in-law would be in no danger of coming to want. His words reveal a skilled mixture of piety and shrewdness—"The Lord hath blessed my master greatly; and he is become great. He has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, men-servants and maid-servants, camels and asses." All these words and deeds on the part of the emissary of the lover would create a favorable atmosphere where the business of wooing once undertaken might proceed briskly.

And the principles which guided this elderly steward in making his selection are full of interest. He paused just outside the village of Nahor and prayed, "O Lord God of my Master, send me good speed this day." Then he proposed that the Lord should guide him by a sign. The nature of it shows his good sense. He would not be guided solely by outward appearance, though he took pains to fix his attention upon a maiden who "was very fair to look upon." The Bible shows no

squeamishness or prudery in naming woman's beauty as entering decisively into the issue.

The servant did not propose as a sign that he should take the young woman who came with a flower in her hair or the one who tripped on the steps descending to the well where he was to water his camels. He suggested that the Lord should permit him to select the maiden who first offered him a drink—he had an eye for a disposition thoughtful and kindly. And when Rebecca appeared "with her pitcher on her shoulder," graceful in her movements and "fair to look upon"; when she showed that ready kindness to a stranger within the gates, saying, "Drink, my lord," letting down her pitcher upon her hand that he might drink; and when her kindness overflowed into recognition of the needs of the animals after their long journey across the sands—"I will draw for thy camels also"—the servant felt that the Lord was sending him good speed.

The young woman's attractions are drawn with a sure hand —she was active and thoughtful, lovely and kindly. The characteristics which appear so strongly in her later life when she had become the mother of those restless, quarrelsome twins, Esau and Jacob, are here in waiting. She was eager, ardent and capable. She ministers at once to the comfort of this stranger; she promptly offers the hospitality of her father's house; she accepts his gifts and wears them home with perfect grace; she introduces him to her brother in such terms that his welcome is instant and hearty; and when proposal is made for her hand, her mind is soon made up. While the other members of her family are hesitating—"Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at least ten"—she is prepared to say, "I will go."

The normal instincts of healthy young people who have reached the mating period; the domestic ambitions of those

who find joy in arranging suitable alliances; and the wise diplomacy of this ambassador at the court of love in making the way of affection run smooth, are all described with utmost candor. And yet, not apart from these natural human instincts but within them, in all their gracious fullness the purposes of the Lord for the accomplishment of his Messianic design are steadily at work, facing squarely upon spiritual achievements of highest worth.

This interblending of the purely human and the wholly divine is indicated in that familiar word of the house steward, "I being in the way, the Lord led me." He put himself "in the way" of success with all the energy, forethought and generous outlay at his command; and then he prayed as if the whole responsibility lay with "the Lord God of heaven"; and the net outcome was that "The Lord led him" in the straight path of achievement.

"Everything that took place on that expedition," as Dr. Parkhurst says, "came to pass in a most simple, natural way. He took the traveled route and so far as we can gather traversed it in the ordinary way, heard no voices, dreamed no dreams, saw no lights—yet 'the Lord led me.' He arrived at the city, stopped at a spring to water his camels, for they were thirsty; saw young women coming to the well at evening time as was their custom; selected the one who according to his taste and judgment was most attractive, and discovering that she was also gracious and kindly, gave her his presents; and then in her own home finding that her family connections were right, he proposed for her hand and heard her say, 'I will go.' Everything came along quietly, nothing irregular, for God is on the side of method. And it is to the credit or Eliezer that when events proceeded so methodically he recognized God's agency so distinctly. 'I being in the way, God led me!'"

The day the caravan returned, Isaac had gone into the fields

to meditate at eventide. The faithful servant had been gone for weeks—it was before the days of rapid transit and the journey was long. The young man was wondering how Eliezer had fared on his errand, when suddenly on the horizon he saw the nodding heads of a caravan of camels! As they drew near a graceful young woman easily lighted from her camel as a mark of respect to her future lord. And she was as lovely in his eyes as she had been in the eyes of the elderly steward. "And Isaac brought her into his mother's tent and she became his wife and he loved her."

Chapter VIII

JACOB AND ESAU

Genesis 25-27

Jacob and Esau—twins! But they were not alike—they were as unlike as William Howard Taft and Theodore Roosevelt. Twins are rarely alike when we pierce below the outer wrapping to the inner disposition.

The twins in this case did not even look alike. Esau "was like a hairy garment." His skin to the touch of his blind father was as the hide of a young goat—symbolic indeed of his sensual, animal nature. "Jacob was a smooth man"—smooth indeed in the accommodated sense of that term.

The contrast extended to their tastes. "The boys grew and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field." He was a typical nomad going far afield in his quest of game. "Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents." He had the commercial instinct keeping him close to the haunts of men where profits grew—that instinct still holds his descendants to the city in preference to all that rural life may offer.

The contrast was seen in the standing they had in their home. "Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison," and because his own uncalculating nature found this bold, impulsive, generous sportsman more congenial. "Rebekah loved Jacob"—her practical, capable nature finding in the all too practical younger son a kindred spirit.

What a wretched scene, alike discreditable to both, is that where the pottage was cooking! The tired hunter, unsuccessful that day in his pursuit of game, comes half-famished to the

tent of the shepherd to ask for food. His expressions are the extravagant and reckless words of a man passionate and uncontrolled. "Feed me with that red! I am faint and at the point to die." A great, strong man unmindful of everything but the demands of appetite, crying like a baby for "that red," insisting that he would not live for ten minutes unless his cravings were met. He is careless of the larger and more remote interests, ready to sacrifice them all to the immediate satisfaction of physical desire, fierce and unruly in its demands.

Just as unworthy is the bearing of the "quiet man" comfortable in his tent. "Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright." He saw that the moment was ripe to bring this fragrant mess of pottage stewing on the fire to a rising market. "Sell me"—he sensed the situation with his purse rather than with his heart. He saw only the chance for profit. His readiness to take advantage of the pressing necessities of his hungry brother would not seem reprehensible to the rude ethics of that period. He only used what chance had brought in his way for all it was worth—alas that this disposition should still persist!

There they stand, the pair of them! There is not much to choose! In front of the bar is the "jolly good fellow" tossing off his glass of liquor, treating his friends in open-handed generosity, spending those earnings needed by wife and child as if he were a prince of the blood. He is despising his birthright to a nobler method of life. His real name is "Esau," no matter how it reads on the polling list.

Behind the bar, temperate, self-restrained, watchful, a "quiet man" to whom the click of the Cash Register is music sweeter than the Fifth Symphony, is the rum seller. He is altogether too prudent himself to drink to excess but stands ready to trade upon the folly, the weakness, the final damnation of his weaker fellows. "Sell me thy manhood," he says; and when the bargain is made, the publican has bartered his beer

to very good purpose. His name is "Jacob," for he is an "Overreacher" with his hand on his brother's purse and on his soul for purposes of gain.

"He sold his birthright to Jacob"—and it was gone! The fact gave him no concern for "he despised his birthright." In the immediate satisfaction of physical appetite the higher interest bulked small upon his narrow horizon. "And Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage"—he had gotten his advantage cheaply enough and his selfish heart rejoiced as if he had found spoil.

Esau paid too much for his pottage, innocent and wholesome food though it was. It is well to beware of temptations encountered and of moral bargains hastily struck when we are hungry or tired or out of sorts. "Who does not know of those moments of weakness when we are fagged with work; with our physical energy, our moral tone has become relaxed? Who does not know how in hours of reaction from keen and exciting engagements, sensual appetite asserts itself and we cry in petulant fashion, 'We shall die if we do not get this gratification'? With positive dismay one considers the weakness and blindness of his hours of appetite and passion."

We have here a further narrative written to throw light upon the fact that the younger nation, Israel, had surpassed the older Edom. The father of the two sons feels himself broken with advancing years and he says to his favorite, the cunning hunter, "Take me venison and make me savory meat such as I love, that I may eat and my soul may bless thee before I die." The strange belief in a mystic efficacy attaching to a dying utterance was common at that time and the old man sought to "gather up all his forces in a single potent, prophetic wish."

It was a cheap sort of blessing he contemplated. It was to spring from no prophetic vision or ecstasy, from no enduement

of power from on high—it was to result from the physical stimulus afforded by meat and wine. He would utter his generous hopes touching the prospects of his older son in that mood of joy which comes from being wined and dined. Rough material this out of which the Lord of the ages had to form the beginnings of a Messianic movement in which the nations should be blessed!

His expressed intent was overheard and here emerges once more the quick-witted, capable Rebecca. We saw her carrying it off with neatness and dispatch when Eliezer came from afar to propose for her hand on behalf of his young master. Years have passed and the maiden has become the mother of grown men, yet her quick eye is not dimmed nor her natural force in carrying her point abated. Her plan swiftly conceived and skilfully executed will set savory meat before the half-blind patriarch and set his blessing upon the head of her favorite before the cunning hunter shall have had time to stalk his deer.

It is a clever scheme, yet Jacob is staggered by its boldness. "But my brother is a hairy man and I am a smooth man—peradventure my father will feel me and I shall bring a curse and not a blessing." But the skin of a young kid (whose body was even then providing the "savory meat") upon the hands and the smooth neck of the "quiet man" would meet that obstacle. "If we should fail," said Jacob, "I shall seem to him a deceiver." The crafty, capable mother, like Lady Macbeth, is confident—"But screw your courage to the sticking place and we'll not fail."

The plan is put through with many a spoken lie adding its ugly help to the acted treachery. "Who art thou?" said the blind father! "And Jacob said, I am Esau, thy first born." "How is it thou hast found it so quickly?" He replied, "Because the Lord thy God hath sent me good speed." What unspeakable cant! "Lying lips are an abomination to the

Lord" in any situation, but the lie coupled with pious reference to God is twice damned. When Jacob came near, the blind father said: "The voice is Jacob's but the hands are Esau's. Art thou my very son Esau?" "And he said, I am."

Then the blessing was bestowed in terms so generous that the words should have struck home to the heart of the deceiver like a knife. Luther said, "Had it been me I would have dropped the dish." But it is a far cry from the warm-hearted, impulsive reformer to this cool, crafty, persistent supplanter. He held onto the dish and onto the blessing and onto all that came his way.

The pathos of Esau's return might have touched a heart of stone. He came in from his hunting with his savory meat and his unblessed life, to receive the father's benediction. And when he learned that again he had been superseded, he cried out, "Is he not rightly named Supplanter, for he hath supplanted me these two times. Is that the only blessing thou hast? Bless me, even me also, O my father." But Isaac answered, "I have made him thy lord . . . what then shall I do for thee?" The oracle once uttered was, according to ancient belief, irrevocable like the law of the Medes and Persians. It was, as they held, spoken under divine impulse and to change it would imply that the divine impulse had been caught napping and compelled to reverse itself—which was unthinkable.

"And Esau hated Jacob and said in his heart, 'The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then I will slay my brother Jacob.'" And the Supplanter trembled under that threat twenty years later when he stood at Jabbok Ford aware that Esau was marching toward him through the night with four hundred Bedouins.

Chapter IX

THE YOUNG MAN'S DREAM

Genesis 28

We left Jacob trembling under the well-deserved curse and threat of the angry brother he had wronged. We find him here enjoying a delightful dream which linked up his lonely, guilty life with the throne of the heavenly grace. Truly "the love of God is broader than the measure of man's mind. And the heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind."

Here again we note the presence of a double narrative with varying reasons assigned for Jacob's sudden departure from his home. In one he flees on the advice of his mother to escape the wrath of his brother who was purposing to kill him. In the other he is sent forth by his father, charged not to take a wife from the daughters of Canaan but to seek a companion among the daughters of Laban, his mother's brother. He is sent away, with the benediction of Isaac sounding in his ears, into Padan-aram on his errand of love.

He toiled along his lonely way from the rolling pastures of Beer-sheba on toward Haran until he found himself amid the cliffs of Bethel. He sees above him the rocks and crags with their bold sky-line like some giant's stairway reaching from earth to heaven.

He is far from all human habitation and must spend the night in the open. He has the earth for his bed. He takes a stone for his pillow. He has the stars for his bed-candles. The silence is unbroken, for companionship he has none. And in that lonely place he lies down to sleep.

"To sleep—perchance to dream." For in those hours of quiet he experiences one of those "dream-visions" of which so much is made in the Old Testament. The special sanctity of the place—for it proved to be one of the abodes of Yahweh —was not suspected by Jacob until it was revealed to him in his dream. He had taken a rude stone not suspecting that it might be the abode of a "spirit." It was believed by primitive men that these "dream-oracles" might be secured more readily by sleeping with the head in contact with a sacred stone.

"In his dream the massive staircase is still before his eyes and it is no longer himself that is toiling up as it leads to an unexplored hilltop." "Behold a ladder set up on the earth and the top of it reached to heaven." He saw earth and sky, the lonely spot where he had halted for the night and the courts of heaven, in direct communication. He saw the messengers of the Most High coming and going upon their ceaseless errands. And he saw at the top of this path of communication the Lord himself!

He received also from his "dream-vision" a great assurance as to his own future. His shrewdness had thus far profited him little. He had driven a hard bargain for a birthright and had lied his way into the possession of the patriarchal blessing. But he was none the richer in personal advantage for all his pains—he was driven from home as a renegade. He was without property and without prospects—with his staff he would pass over the Jordan into the borders of a foreign land.

But in that hour of depression there came the vision of something vast and rich. He heard the One who stood at the top of that path of ascent say, "I am Yahweh, the God of Abraham thy father and the God of Isaac. The land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it and to thy seed. Behold I am with thee and will keep thee whithersoever thou goest and will bring thee again into this land."

It was more than he deserved. It was more than he had dared to hope. We can understand how the very thought of it, even in a dream, took away all desire for sleep. "And Jacob awaked out of his sleep and said, Surely Yahweh is in this place and I knew it not." His first feeling in the presence of the divine was not one of joy but of fear. He had chanced unwittingly on an abode of the deity and had treated the spot as if it were common ground. The Lord was in that place and he knew it not, "and he was afraid."

"How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God and this is the gate of heaven." He took the stone which he had used as a pillow and now recognizing that it had mystic properties, he set it up as a pillar of worship. He poured oil upon it after the manner of his time, anointing it as a sacred thing.

Here is a new and higher element introduced into the experience of this selfish, crafty man, of which we have had no previous mention in his history. He had been living solely on the dead level of a clever ingenuity, pitting his own cunning against the slender ability of his half-blind father and the dull-witted brother. He is now introduced to a third dimension—he is made to see that his life plan must have in it provision not only for length and breadth but for height and depth. He will have to deal with One unto whom the secrets of all hearts are revealed. He must reckon with those messengers which come and go upon the ladder of heaven giving man his sense of privilege in and his sense of obligation to the Lord of Hosts.

"How dreadful is this place!" "What idols of the heart were killed in that mighty awe we know not. 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom'—not the intellectual veneration which is sometimes mistaken for fear but the moral obeisance of the whole man, feeling its littleness and

seeing the infinite quality of God." He called that lonely spot among the rocks, "The House of God"—and well he might!

Here in dim outline is one of the great cardinal principles of our Protestant faith, the right of personal and immediate access to the throne of the heavenly grace. There is a path of spiritual ascent which is not far from any one of us. There is an upper world of spiritual values and forces which towers above the common grind as the Matterhorn lifts its high head above the Rhone Valley—and it stands before our moral need like an open door. "Let us therefore come boldly"—bad though we may have been, even as this selfish, crafty, cheating man of old—"unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

But men whose lives have shown such moral blemish as that which defaces the earlier history of Jacob are not transformed in a night. When this awakened man, having performed his simple acts of devotion by setting up the rude altar and anointing it with sacred oil, begins to pray we hear again the accents of the trader lowering the tone of his appeal. "If God will be with me and keep me in this way that I go and give me bread to eat and raiment to put on so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God." How hardly shall they that have the bargaining spirit enter the Kingdom of God!

The devil's sneer, "Does Job fear God for naught?" fell to the ground in the face of overwhelming proof of Job's disinterestedness. But this scheming soul is not swept off his feet by any such unthrifty purpose, even in the face of that vision which should have shamed the last remnant of his greed. The man in the land of Uz said, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." The man in Haran said, "If God will be with me and pay me well in bread to eat and raiment to put on and protection for my advance, then shall the Lord be my God."

There in that high hour of spiritual privilege he shrewdly seeks to make his promised consecration conditional upon a profitable return in material advantage. "The quiet man, dwelling in tents," is still determined to bring his devotion to a good market, to secure for it the highest price available. He would make his religion worth while in terms of gain. Alas! poor Jacob! He will have to wrestle all night until the breaking of the day, again and again and again, before he wins a better name than "Supplanter" and a nature which will enroll him with those princes who have power with God and with men.

The bargaining mood is not the mood for an effective approach to the throne of grace. "The wages of sin is death"—the deserts of wrongdoing may be accurately computed by the tables men know. "But everlasting life is the gift of God"—it does not come according to the fixed terms of some hard and fast agreement. It is not the maximum wage which righteous men have justly earned by an appointed measure of obedient service. It is a voluntary, abundant and unending bestowal in love. "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom."

The man bent upon securing for himself a certain measure of present and temporal blessing, along with a vast increment of future happiness yet to be realized, in return for the trust he shows toward God, has not as yet entered the moral field at all. He is simply undertaking to do a bit of profitable business with the Lord.

"I have called you friends"—and what place is there for "a statement of account" in the exchange of favors between friends! "Except ye become as little children"—little children do not live in the mood which prompts an effort to secure good bargains from the Father. The "quiet man" will find it a long way in miles and in mood to that place where he can say, at last, "I have seen God face to face."

Chapter X

THE STRUGGLE IN THE NIGHT

Genesis 32

Jacob had been living with his feet and his eyes very much on the ground. He had shown himself a man of affairs, practical to the thirty-third and last degree. He had followed up his shrewd bargain in getting a valuable birthright for a cheap mess of hot pottage and his clever trick in winning the blessing from his blind father, by manipulating the flocks of his employer Laban so skilfully that at the termination of their contract Jacob had the larger part of the flocks and Laban a very instructive period of experience. It is not strange that the schemer said to Leah, "I see that your father's countenance is not toward me as before." We should expect the relations to be a little strained.

Now this thrifty soul who had "made good" (speaking after the manner of men), by making his "pile," was returning home with all his gains and blushing honors thick upon him. But when he drew near to the borders of Edom where Esau lived, he recalled that old resentment coupled with a threat against his life and he was afraid. He instantly sent a conciliatory message to Esau. He couched it in Oriental phrase, demeaning himself and exalting the one he would appease—the extreme servility of his language would be deemed the very height of elaborate courtesy. *"Thy servant Jacob* has tarried with Laban until now; he has oxen and asses, flocks and herds, and he has sent to tell *My Lord* Esau that he might find grace in his sight."

But Jacob's messengers returned from their oily errand with the report that Esau had already taken the field. He was marching toward Jacob with four hundred armed Bedouins. "Then Jacob was greatly distressed." He was no longer dealing with a careless, impulsive hunter standing single-handed in his loss of birthright and blessing—he was encountering a roving, powerful sheik at the head of four hundred retainers.

"Be sure your sin will find you out." The great moral order is not far from any one of us and it does not show itself indifferent to our evil doing. The dark cloud of retribution approaching because some man has done wrong means that there is a God in Israel. The solemn fact that "the way of the transgressor is hard," which stands unaltered by the Higher Criticism, must be faced. Jacob, trembling with fear, that night at a lonely spot called Jabbok Ford realized that what a man sows, he reaps.

Take it in an individual case akin to the experience of grasping Jacob! Here is a modern man entirely absorbed in making money—he has allowed money to become no longer a useful, obedient servant but an imperious master. He has reached the point where he eats and drinks, thinks and plans, dreams and lives in terms of material gain.

This man need not be surprised if he finds certain hard lines appearing in his face marring the gentler look of sympathy and kindliness once there. He need not be surprised if he finds himself becoming coldly indifferent to the interests of weaker men whose hopes are crushed, whose burdens are made heavier, by those commercial energies which he has helped to create and control.

And sadder yet this man need not be surprised if the standards of his own home life become materialized until the old interests of worship, aspiration and Christian service are utterly obscured. He need not be surprised if his own sons

shame him and wring his heart by their lack of those finer qualities he manifested at their age. When he sees this process of judgment in operation let him know that there is a God in Israel and that four hundred Bedouins of retribution are in full cry against his peace.

Jacob took all the precautions possible. He divided his flocks and herds into two bands so that if one was attacked the other might escape. He selected a generous present of camels and cows, sheep and goats for Esau, sending it ahead in installments, in five separate droves with spaces between, hoping to wear down the wrath of his angry brother by this succession of happy and generous surprises. He had such faith in the might of property that he believed he might yet buy off that richly deserved retribution.

Then feeling how inadequate it all was, he fell down and prayed. He prayed all night in such agony as a man might feel in wrestling with some physical antagonist. Earlier in the evening he thought that he had only Esau and his Bedouins to reckon with. But as the night wore on he felt that by his course of selfish trickery he had been defying the whole unseen world. He had been pitting his puny cunning against the moral order. He had been putting up his hands to fight the Almighty. Now that sterner and more significant opposition stood athwart his path.

His prayer came in spurts like the cries of a man in sore straits. "O God of my fathers, I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies! But deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of Esau lest he smite me and the mother with the children." "Tell me thy name." "I will not let thee go except thou bless me."

He had called the place where he had pitched his tents, "Mahanaim, Two camps." He felt that besides his own camp he had come to "the camp of the deity." And now he finds

himself in a personal encounter with "the spirit of the place." He may have thought of it as one of those "night-spirits" which come forth under cover of darkness, returning to their hiding places with the dawn. He heard a mysterious voice say, "Let me go for the day breaketh."

We know the feeling as expressed in Hamlet. "It was about to speak when the cock crew, and then it started like a guilty thing upon a fearful summons. At his warning, whether in sea or fire, in earth or air, the extravagant and erring spirit hies to his confine." The same feeling that the "night-spirit" flees at daybreak caused Jacob to redouble his earnestness that he might yet obtain a blessing which would change the situation where he found himself—and change perhaps his own ugly name and nature. "I will not let thee go."

When the sun rose, he felt himself possessed of a new purpose and spirit. He felt that he had "prevailed with God"—he now hopes to prevail with men. "And Jacob lifted up his eyes and behold Esau came and with him four hundred men. His manner in meeting Esau is most interesting. He marshaled his family in the reverse order of his affection for them—he had children born to him from both of his wives and from the housemaids as well. "He put the handmaids and their children foremost and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost." If the slaughtering instinct of those wild men should perchance be appeased with less than the total number of possible victims, he would have them spare the dearest.

"He passed over before them and bowed himself to the ground seven times until he came near to his brother." Here is the Oriental kotowing and salaaming—he would have bowed himself seventy times seven to have gained his end. And the knees of his language are still more facile. "Who are these?" said Esau. And he said, "The children which God hath

graciously given thy servant." And at this the handmaids and their children, Leah also with her children and Rachel and Joseph "bowed themselves." And when Esau indicated something of the chivalrous magnanimity he was prepared to show, Jacob said, "I have seen thy face as though I had seen the face of God and thou wast pleased with me."

Flattery here hath made her masterpiece! The subservient desire to please and placate could go no higher—or lower. "The quiet man, dwelling in tents," was set upon the task of taming the ferocity of the wild and hairy hunter whose anger he had provoked and he is ready to go all lengths in self-abasement.

It was effective, even as diplomacy hath its victories no less than Dreadnoughts. The man Esau, whom we have learned to regard as a rough, rude nature given over to uncontrolled appetite, here shows himself noble and princely. He might have made short work of Jacob with his hardly gotten "flocks and herds" and of the women and children. But the mailed fist of vengeance is nowhere to be seen. We find instead an open, outstretched hand of fraternal welcome. "Esau ran to meet him and embraced him; he fell upon his neck and kissed him."

Even the present, which Jacob had shrewdly sent ahead, is at first declined. "I have enough, my brother," said Esau, "keep what thou hast." But the smooth man pressed it upon him with words much smoother than oil, and Esau yielded.

In the joy of reconciliation Esau proposed that they should join forces and make their further journey together. But Jacob pleaded the inability of his tender children to keep pace with the four hundred men, and the further fact that in his flocks were many that were with young. He therefore declines the proffered escort but with all imaginable courtesy. "Let *My*

Lord pass over before *his servant;* and I will lead on softly as the cattle and the children are able to endure."

It is all as good as a play—it is better than a play for a deeper note is struck. There is good in every rougher nature when we "observingly distill it out." And the man who has seen God face to face feels that now he must see the reconciled face of his brother.

Chapter XI

JOSEPH SOLD INTO EGYPT

Genesis 37

We do not need to understand Hebrew to be able to account for the fact that Joseph was *persona non grata* to his brothers. The seed he sowed with diligent hand was not calculated to produce a harvest of popularity.

He was a tale-bearer. He looked down upon the sons of his father who had been born of the housemaids and sought to discredit them with Jacob. "The lad was with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report." The tattler in school and the squealer in other walks of life comes in for the contempt of his fellows. And whatever allowance may be made for exceptional situations, the instinct which brands the tale-bearer as mean is wholesome.

He was his father's favorite, a heavy load for any child to bear, receiving showy expressions of this parental partiality. "Israel loved Joseph more than all his children because he was the son of his old age" (and because he was the child of Rachel, the favorite wife) "and he made him a coat of many colors." It was well-nigh inevitable that the boy should become vain and domineering.

He had his full share of the conceit frequently found in that period of life accustomed to think quite as highly of itself as it ought to think. He had his dreams of a brilliant future—"day dreams" they may have been, the open-eyed prevision of splendid achievement which comes to healthy and capable

youth. His dreams were well enough, but he was so callow as to relate them with irritating gusto.

He told his brothers that he would be the tallest sheaf in the field and that they as lesser sheaves would make obeisance to him. He would better have kept this expectation to himself—at least until he had done something substantial to warrant the prophecy. He went still further and included his elders and betters in that general obeisance which his advancing life would command. He saw himself become the center of the whole solar system in that little land of Canaan, the rest of the family revolving about him as minor satellites. "Behold the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me." This was too much even for his indulgent, doting father. Jacob rebuked the ambitious boy.

You need not turn the leaf of your Bible to know that a young fellow who talked in that vein would be unpopular. His brothers envied him his coat and the marked favor of his father and they hated him for his ungracious conceit. The father's love took no note of all this. When the older brothers were pasturing their flocks in Shechem, Jacob sent Joseph to learn how they fared and to bring him word again. He little knew that he was sending his favorite as a lamb among wolves.

When his brothers saw him coming toward them across the plain of Dothan "they conspired against him." They said in scornful tones, as practical, hard-headed men will: "Behold, the dreamer cometh! Come, now, let us cast him into a pit and we shall see what will become of his dreams!"

We have here in the account of what followed the blending of two strains of tradition. In one account Joseph is sold to the Ishmaelites on the advice of Judah. "Judah said to his brothers, What profit is it if we slay our brother and conceal his blood? Let us sell him to the Ishmaelites and let not our

hand be upon him for he is our brother and our flesh. And they sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver."

In the other account, Joseph is seized and carried off by passing Midianites unknown to his brothers and to the dismay of Reuben, who had counseled delay when proposal was made to slay the dreamer. Reuben said, "Shed no blood; cast him into this pit—that he might deliver him out of their hand to restore him to his father." This second account is thus given —"There passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit; and they brought Joseph into Egypt. And Reuben returned to the pit and behold Joseph was not in the pit and he rent his clothes. And he returned to his brethren saying, The child is not; and I, whither shall I go?" The compiler of the narrative found these two documents and he boldly incorporates them into his story without trying to remove or reconcile the divergences.

The story is exceedingly well told. Every stroke counts. The lines on the faces of those Hebrew men are brought out as if Thomas Nast were sketching them in crayon. The ten practical men looked across the plains of Dothan and saw nothing but grass and sheep, pasturage and mutton. The yet-to-be-revealed possibilities of that life in little Canaan were hidden from their gaze because their eyes were holden. They sneered at the mind which would busy itself with loftier considerations and values more remote than grass and mutton. "Behold, the dreamer"—you can feel the scorn of the prosaic nature!

They cast the boy into a pit and then in utter heartlessness seated themselves near by to enjoy the dainties he had brought from home. While they were eating a caravan of traders came over the brow of the hill on their way from Damascus to the valley of the Nile. Judah's mind was ever thrifty and he suggested, "What profit is it if we slay our brother and

conceal his blood?" There is no money in murder. "Let us *sell him* to the Ishmaelites!" Here was the proverbial instinct already on its feet and doing business in the very childhood of that race. "Let us sell him and let not our hand be upon our brother, for"—and here emerges Mr. Pecksniff, who is much older than the time of Dickens—"for he is our brother and our flesh." How plausible he is! "And his brothers hearkened unto him"—they profitably sold their brother to the Ishmaelites; their hands were not stained now in innocent blood and they were several shekels apiece to the good besides.

The man who decides to coin his brother's life into money in place of destroying it with an ax has contented himself with so much milder form of wrongdoing that he feels almost virtuous. Let us slay our brother! This has an atrocious sound! It smacks of the doings of gunmen. It recalls to our minds such names as those of "Lefty Louie" and "Gyp the Blood." The very thought of it is abhorrent. Let not our hand be upon him for he is our flesh! But let us sell him—this is much more humane! Let us burn out his energy swiftly in the long, hard hours of the steel mill to make the profits larger; when he is exhausted before his time, we can fling him aside; we can "scrap" him to make room for a fresh hand. Let us set the pace in the factory so sharp that the man of fifty cannot hold it but must drop out and vainly tramp the streets searching for a job until in desperation a pistol or an open gas jet rings down the curtain on this tragic story. Let us keep the wage of the girl so near the danger line that unless she is splendidly fortified with moral stamina she may reach the point where having sold her days to greed she sells her nights to shame. Let not our hand be stained by the murder of our flesh and blood—let us sell them in these more delicate and refined ways to increase the toll of profit! The voice of Judah is still heard in the land!

But we are not to set one crime against another and because the less bloody offends us least conclude that we are treading the path of rectitude. Between two evils, choose neither. The Lord in the bestowal of his favor does not pick and choose between the grosser and the less gross, the coarser and the more delicate ways of taking life. His yea is yea, and his nay, nay; his right is right, and not a subtler dilution of evil. There are no such things as "white lies" and "black lies" and "gray lies"—there are just "lies," and all shades of them are "an abomination unto the Lord." There are no men's sizes, women's sizes and children's sizes in disobeying God.

But the ten men must give some account of Joseph at home. They added to their heartlessness and treachery a big, hideous, cruel lie. "They took Joseph's coat and killed a goat and dipped the coat in the blood. They brought it to their father and said: "We have found this! Know now whether it be thy son's coat or not?" They did not say that it was Joseph's coat or that a wild beast had devoured him. They simply held up the coat and let it speak for itself. There are moral natures so intricately made that they feel as truthful as George Washington if only they may allow their hands to tell the lie without moving the lips.

The stricken father rent his clothes and wore sackcloth and mourned the loss of his favorite, refusing to be comforted. "I will go down to the grave to my son mourning."

Here is the Oriental love of romance displayed in this opening chapter of one of the choicest stories in the Scriptures! The mysterious disappearance of a favorite son; the uncontrolled grief of the father carrying his gray hairs swiftly toward the grave; the ugly secret lying like lead, in certain better moments, upon the guilty hearts of the brothers; and the uncertainty which hung for a time over the future fortunes of the lad, all serving to give the story a thrilling interest.

Chapter XII

JOSEPH INTERPRETS DREAMS

Genesis 40

You dream when you are asleep. Sometimes you dream when you are wide awake. The latter sort we call "day-dreams." In either case the dream is a creation of the mind with no solid reality as yet standing over against it. The dreams which come at night are, as often as not, wild, free, fantastic imaginings out of all relation to solid fact, incapable of being wrought into actual achievement. But the day-dreams, those shadowy, alluring outlines of something higher, finer, vaster than anything achieved as yet, are sometimes the most significant of experiences. I am sorry for the young man or maiden who has not at times heard mysterious music produced by no human hand nor voice; who has not seen wide stretches of possible achievement outlined against the sky with no secure resting-place on solid earth. At the heart of all the finer human action lies a dream, a vision, an insight.

In ancient times the Orientals especially attached more significance to those "night-visions" than is common in this bustling Western world. "Dreams, auguries, omens, visions, were a recognized part of the average human experience. In the absence of ordered and verified knowledge concerning the operations of the universe, dreams were points of contact with those supernatural powers from whose sway man in no age of the world can detach himself altogether. Monarchs maintained in their royal courts magicians whose business it was to explain these monitions from a higher source."

The earlier dreams of Joseph touching his own future greatness had served to sustain him in many an hour of apparent defeat. He had been carried by the Ishmaelites from the pleasant plain of Dothan into Egypt and sold as a slave-boy to Potiphar, an officer in the army of Pharaoh. He was a thoughtful, faithful servant and he was advanced until he held a responsible place in his master's household. But when he repelled the unholy attachment which Potiphar's faithless wife had formed for the young Hebrew, he found himself unjustly accused and then cast into prison because of his fidelity to his master's honor.

But through it all he cherished that same brave hope which fired his heart when he saw himself winning his way among the sheaves and then among the stars. The idealist looks habitually not at the things which are seen but at the things which are unseen. He knows that though the earthly house of immediate success be dissolved, he has within him something not made with hands, eternal and celestial. Thus he keeps his heart true and his eyes front, pressing on toward the great fulfillment. Give us an idealist every time to show himself brave and resolute in the face of apparent defeat!

Every man's life is in itself a plan of God, a finite expression of a thought infinite in its reach and grasp. And every man's life is a necessary element in that vaster plan which waits upon our obedient co-operation for its fulfillment. Joseph first framed his high anticipations out of sheaves. He went on until his mind was busy with the stars. He was destined to have his share in a moral movement which will outshine and outlast the stars themselves. And in all the dark, hard days which lay between the pit of Dothan and his seat at Pharaoh's right hand, he was sustained by visions and dreams which rose perpetual in his sky.

Here we find him in prison. "But the Lord was with Joseph

and showed him mercy and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison." "What a poor compensation," says Joseph Parker in delicate irony. "The man's character is taken away and the Lord gives him favor in the sight of a jailer! There are honors in life which are aggravations. My name is blasted, my home is broken up, my whole life withered away right down into the roots, but on either side there is a turnkey who says he has great confidence in me."

But read on! The Lord has not let his voice fall yet. This is only a comma or a semicolon, not a period. Read on! The bit of favor which the keeper of the prison showed him is not a mockery of the justice to which the young man is entitled. The mills of the gods grind slow but they grind; and the good grist comes at last. "Shall not God avenge his own elect who cry day and night unto him though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will." Read on!

How men's lives are linked up by connections and purposes too subtle for our ken! There had been an unpleasantness below stairs in Pharaoh's palace. The head butler and the head baker were not now on duty—they were in disgrace and in prison. And one of these two men under censure became the means at last of introducing Joseph to Pharaoh's notice at the very hour when the way of advancement should be open for his feet.

One morning the imprisoned butler and baker found themselves depressed by their dreams. The two dreams were alike and unlike. The butler had seen himself once more pouring the juice of the grape into Pharaoh's cup and giving it into Pharaoh's hand. "The baker's dream contained sinister features which were absent from the first, the decisive difference being that while the butler dreamed that he actually performed the duties of his office, the baker only sought to do so but was prevented." He saw himself carrying three baskets of white

bread and bakemeats upon his head, but the birds came and ate them out of the baskets. In life he would have driven off the birds but in his dream he felt himself powerless, even as he was to find himself helpless in the terrible fulfillment of that dream.

They appealed to Joseph as an expert in the language of dreams to learn their meaning. Joseph had gained modesty since those days when he walked the plains of Dothan, his head among the stars. "Interpretations belong to God," he said. The coat of many colors had given place to the dull prison garb he now wore. And in that change of fortune he had gained new moods and methods. He would not now urge upon his associates the fact that he felt himself the tallest sheaf in the field or the central figure in the solar system where his orbit lay. "It is not in me; interpretations belong to God."

In this mood of reverent, expectant awe, he undertook the interpretation of the dreams. He gave his judgment that in three days the butler would be restored to his place in the service of Pharaoh. And it was so! "When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good," he was all ears for the good fortune awaiting him. But Joseph said to him, "In three days thou shalt be hanged." And it came to pass on the third day this also was so!

Interpretations belong to God and the man of God is not always able to prophesy smooth things. His open vision enables and compels him to behold alike the goodness and the severity of God. He sees that in the divine appointments fortune and fate vary according to the deeds done in the body whether they be good or bad.

"This is a lesson for preachers of the gospel," said one of them. "It would be a joyous thing to say to every man, 'You are all right; you are on the road to glory; nothing can stand between you and heaven.' But if I fail to warn the ungodly

man, to tell him that God is angry with the wicked every day, that the Son of God has died for the sins of the world, that there is no man too vile to be received and redeemed by the great Sacrifice, then I shall fail in my mission and my word of joy shall be a mockery and a cruel thing. Your pale, reproachful face turned upon me at the last day would be an everlasting punishment."

Joseph asked the joyous butler to remember him when he came again into Pharaoh's house and intercede for his release from the unjust sentence he was serving. But the glad heart may show itself ungrateful through absorption in its own pleasures. "The chief butler did not remember Joseph but forgot him."

How character ripens in adversity! Wheat ripens best under the warmth of smiling summer skies, but the severe winter of struggle and hardship is needed for the maturing of certain finer qualities of mind and heart. It has been found impossible to produce apples with the choicest flavor where there is no frost. And I am not sure that the best type of human excellence can be secured without frost.

How far we have gotten in our study beyond that callow, conceited youth who spake boastfully of the day when sheaves and stars, men, women and children would alike perform their lowly obeisance before his exalted worth! Here in this modest, patient man, learning obedience to finer methods of life by the things that he suffers, we have aspiration of a higher type.

He seems to have borne the false accusation of the wicked woman without a word of recrimination, lest he should work injury to the honor of his master. He spends his weary days in prison not in repining and dejection but in such hopeful demeanor that he wins the favor of the warden and finds himself approached by his fellow-prisoners in their times of de-

pression. He utters no word of censure touching the ingratitude of the butler, though he was doomed to two years more of imprisonment. He has learned to labor and to wait. The prosaic men on the fields of Dothan speaking in scorn uttered they knew not what. "Behold, the dreamer." "He endured, seeing Him who is invisible."

Chapter XIII

JOSEPH MADE RULER OF EGYPT

Genesis 41

The stories of the Hebrew making his way to power and influence at an alien court through the sheer force of personal ability are naturally dear to men of that race. Here was Joseph coming up out of the pit at Dothan through the prison house on to the palace of Pharaoh! Here was Daniel "preferred above the other presidents and princes" until he stood high at the court of Darius! Here was Benjamin Disraeli, of a race formerly disfranchised in England, rising above the jeers of his opponents over the failure of his first speech in Parliament and becoming at last Prime Minister of that most Christian Queen, Victoria! Let man beware lest he curse whom God hath blessed!

We left Joseph interpreting the dreams of butlers and bakers. Here he stands two years later before Pharaoh interpreting a monarch's dream and suggesting courses of action having to do with the preservation of life in a million homes.

"Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings." When Cyrus Hamlin was a student in Bowdoin College he read these words. He read them with an incredulous smile, as he told us in later life, saying to himself, "I am diligent in my business but I shall not stand before kings because there are no kings in my country." And the words with his own hasty comment came to his mind when he stood before the Sultan of Turkey to receive the Imperial Irade granting him permission to build Robert College on the banks of the Bosporus. The God-fearing man diligent in the King's busi-

ness builds more wisely than he knows—he builds he knows not what!

"Pharaoh dreamed and behold he stood by the river"—the River Nile which by its overflow was the source of fertility in Pharaoh's realm. There came up out of the river seven fat cows, followed by seven lean and hungry cows. And the seven lean cows ate the seven fat ones and remained as raw and bony as before. And because the crisis was near and serious the dream was doubled—the king saw the same transaction repeated when seven ears of corn, blasted and withered, made way with seven good ears. In the morning he called his magicians but they were powerless to interpret the meaning of what he had seen.

The Hebrew delighted ever in portraying the victory of insight begotten by true religion over the futile attempts of heathen magic. The achievements of Moses when he stretched forth his mysterious wand put to shame "all the enchantments" of the Egyptian magicians. Daniel shewed himself competent to read the handwriting on the wall which troubled the guilty soul of Belshazzar when "all the enchanters and soothsayers of the Chaldeans" had failed to make it known. "When they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits and unto wizards that peep and mutter, should not a people seek unto their God?"

When Pharaoh's magicians confessed themselves unable to convert into the familiar change used in common life the mysterious values beheld in the mysterious silences of the night, "his spirit was troubled." He trembled in the presence of the Unknown. He was not disturbed because some rival monarch had announced an intended attack upon his borders. He was troubled by the suggestion that unseen and mysterious forces might be threatening the prosperity of his kingdom—he did not know "what God was about to do."

In the distress which made itself felt throughout the palace the memory of the forgetful, ungrateful butler was jogged. "There was with us a young man, a Hebrew—and to each man according to his dream he did interpret." Upon this Joseph was hastily summoned from his prison and at last he stood before kings! He is finding his way up among the sheaves and soon his name will be written among the stars. Yet his head is not turned.

He has learned wisdom, modesty and good manners by the things he has suffered. He listens to the summons of the king and to the statement of the task appointed him as an interpreter of dreams. His word of reply is a blending of religious sincerity and of gracious politeness in the presence of the monarch. How far he has traveled from the plain and from the mood of Dothan! "It is not in me; God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth that he may bring forth more.

He was seventeen years old when he walked in happy-hearted self-confidence across the plains of Dothan in the face of those duller natures who scorned his dreams. He was now thirty. He had increased in stature, in wisdom and in power to win favor with God and men. It had taken thirteen long years for his dreams about the sheaves and the stars to reach their fulfillment. But thirteen years with the Lord are as one moment of time and one moment of time as thirteen years. The Lord keeps time in his own way, having ends in view not yet revealed.

What a lesson in patience to this hurrying age whose outward and visible symbols of an inward and unreasoning speed are to be found in the sharp ring of the telephone demanding instant attention and the shrill screech of the motor car striking down its victim before he has time to jump. The toilers who are busied with the more vital processes of earth and sky

show less of this unseemly haste. "Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth and hath long patience for it until he receive the early and the latter rain."

The butler's dream that he might again possess his butler's job required but three days for its complete fulfillment. The smaller interests came soon to their ripening. But when a man's mind is among the stars and his aspirations have to do with the unfolding purposes of God in nobler values, he must learn to labor and to wait.

The spoiled child, the censorious tale-bearer, the callow, conceited youth must needs take time for those years of schooling which shall fit him for his high tasks. The Almighty himself requires time and the slow tuition of experience to work out the baser alloy and show the fine gold suited for his own designs. If a man is to come from a pit to a palace, he must gain the regal heart and method against the day of his arrival.

There's a divinity which shapes our ends rough-hewn though they may be by doting fathers and envious brothers, by evil-minded accusers and ungrateful associates. It was one of the greatest historians America has produced who said as a result of his careful scanning of human annals, "Read any page of history to the bottom and you will find written there these significant words—*'God reigns!'*"

"It is not in me; God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." And when the monarch had related his two mysterious dreams, the man of insight gave his judgment that seven years of plenty were to come up out of the river whence the king saw the fat cows emerge. Then by the insufficient overflow of the Nile there would come by that same route seven years of famine. He counseled the king to seek out a man "discreet and wise" and let him appoint overseers that the fifth part of the food of the good years might be laid up in

store in state granaries to meet the distress which would result from the years of famine.

His words were fitly spoken. He showed also an excellent spirit. "And Pharaoh said, Can we find such an one as this, a man in whom the spirit of God is?" And he straightway appointed Joseph to the high office of Food Commissioner, bestowing upon him the raiment, the ornament and the appointments befitting his rank, that all might know that he was a man set in authority. "And Joseph went out over the land of Egypt." He did his appointed work thoroughly and well. And in consequence he had honor with his royal master and with the people of the land.

"A man in whom the spirit of God is." Here was the ultimate reason for his advancement! Here is the customary reference of all insight and judgment to its final source, to the Author and Giver of all good gifts! Joseph could be trusted now among the sheaves of Pharaoh's fields and among the stars of heaven where he looked daily for guidance! If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God.

He married an Egyptian wife, a woman of social position as befitted his present rank. He had two sons born to him before the years of famine came. But he had not become an Egyptian, doing in Egypt as the Egyptians did. He held fast his faith in the God of his fathers. He gave Hebrew names to the two boys. "Joseph called the name of the firstborn, Manasseh"—which means, "making to forget"—"for he said, God hath made me forget all my toil." "The name of the second he called Ephraim"—"fruitful"—"for God hath made me fruitful in the land of my affliction." "The archers sorely grieved him and shot at him and persecuted him but his bow abode in strength. The arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the Mighty One."

Chapter XIV

JOSEPH MEETS HIS BRETHREN

Genesis 42

Here the scene shifts in the opening words of the chapter from Egypt to Canaan. We may have wondered why Joseph had not communicated with his old home after his exaltation to be viceroy of Egypt. He might have sent some message to his aged father during those "years of plenty." But he could not have done this without revealing the treachery of his brothers. He had learned to wait. Let those guilty men confess their own wrong to him, to their father and to God. It will be for their moral advantage far more than to be accused by Joseph himself. He could bide his time for he endured as seeing values invisible.

"The famine was sore in all the earth," and Canaan began to be in want. "And Jacob said to his sons, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt—get you down thither and buy." But it was as though he had struck them a blow. Egypt! They had sold their own flesh and blood into the slavery of that fateful land and now at the end of twenty years the burden of guilt still lay upon their hearts like lead. It all happened a long time back—it seems unreasonable for conscience to be raking up old scores. But there it was! "Egypt"—the very sound of it started the cold sweat on those men who had sold their brother! Their confusion was written on their very faces—"Jacob said, Why do ye look one upon another?"

But the bite of the famine was sharper than a serpent's tooth and the ten men consented to go down into Egypt to buy grain. Ten of them—"Benjamin, Joseph's brother, Jacob sent not

with his brethren, for he said, Lest peradventure mischief might befall him." The memory of that fatal errand upon which he had sent the other child of his beloved Rachel, when the lad had disappeared from the plains of Dothan, was still an open running sore.

When the ten strangely dressed foreigners, unable to make their business known except through "an interpreter," appeared, they were brought before the viceroy. The boy of seventeen whom they had sold to the Ishmaelites had so altered in face and figure during the twenty years that they did not know him. But they were mature men when they did him the wrong in Dothan and he recognized them instantly.

Here is the boy who wore the coat of many colors, now become a man and appareled like a king! Here is the boy who dreamed of a certain priority attaching to his sheaf in the field, with the ten older brothers at last bowing obsequiously before him! Here he is administering a great trust on which the preservation of life over wide areas depends in such fashion as to enroll his name among the stars. We are seeing indeed what became of his dreams.

But he made himself strange to his brothers. He spoke roughly to them. He accused them of being spies. And when they insisted that they were ten harmless and needy men, all sons of one father, come to buy corn for their families, he challenged them to prove their statements.

The story is exceedingly well worked out. There is many a deft touch in the painting of the scenes. "Nay, my Lord, thy servants are no spies. We thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan. The youngest is this day with our father and one is not." One is not! Joseph generously and delicately passed over this reference without inquiring into the meaning of it. He would not press his advantage too sternly.

But he held them in duress for three days and then released nine of them to carry back corn to their needy families, holding Simeon as a hostage until they should have made good their statement by bringing their youngest brother. He thus arranged to see Benjamin, his own full-brother, again, and he would test the present quality of those men who had shown themselves heartless on the plain of Dothan. "Bring your youngest brother unto me so shall your words be verified and ye shall not die."

The nine men were heavy-hearted as they thought of returning to their father leaving Simeon behind in prison. They began to discuss the hard lines into which they had fallen in their own Hebrew tongue, unaware that Joseph understood them for he had used an interpreter. He heard them say, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother in that we saw the distress of his soul when he besought us and we would not hear—therefore this distress is come upon us." Pay day had come. The long-deferred bills for their wrongdoing were falling due. "Here is the statement of your account," the moral order was saying to them, "kindly settle at once." And when that day comes payment must be made to the uttermost farthing.

Reuben, the eldest, recalled the ineffective good intentions he had cherished that fateful day and he endeavors to draw from that fact what comfort he can as he censures his brothers. "Spake I not unto you saying, Do not sin against the child, but ye would not hear. Therefore, behold his blood is required." Just so! His blood is always required at the hands of those who did the wrong. If promissory notes held by the little human institutions we call "banks" fall due and must be met, we may be certain that collection day will come in that vaster system maintained by the Judge of all the earth.

Their anguish of heart was so apparent that it touched the

heart of Joseph whom they had wronged. "He turned himself about from them and wept." He had not become in any wise bitter and vindictive; he had not become supercilious and indifferent toward those who had done him the wrong.

Joseph's compassion was heightened by a new note heard in the tones of these men. He once heard them speak in gutturals and with an accent of scorn as they called him "The Dreamer." Now he heard them say, "our brother," and the anguish they expressed over the wrong done to that brother brought tears.

Here is a man who has learned in whatsoever state he is to hold a true course and steer by the stars. He had been abased by pit and prison house for thirteen years. He was now able to abound as a high official at the court of Pharaoh. But in all these things, whether full or hungry, he had been instructed in that finer mode of life he now reveals.

The ten brothers also had learned something by the things they had suffered. If Joseph could show himself able to react against the memory of a wrong done with tears of sympathy for the moral failure of the offender, these men, who twenty years before could sit down at the mouth of the pit where they had cast a helpless boy "to eat bread," were now moved to say, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother." They were in a far country under the stress of a mighty famine; they were in want but they were learning to say, "We have sinned against heaven and in Thy sight."

The whole scene as here portrayed is full of promise. When Joseph first recognized them what words he might have uttered! "Now I have you! Once you put me in a pit—I shall shake you over hell! You smote me with whips—I will smite you with scorpions. I shall operate upon the law, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.' That is elementary morality—it is alphabetic justice—justice at its lowest point. It is not two

eyes for an eye, two teeth for a tooth, but an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a blow for a blow, a pit for a pit, selling for selling and so on." But evident distress over wrong done was met by magnanimity on the part of the one having power to inflict vengeance, and from those two co-operating elements we may look for glad results.

The nine men leaving Simeon in duress departed upon their sorrowful return trip. *En route* it was discovered that each man's money which he had paid for the grain purchased had been placed in the mouth of his sack. It was a strange land where they had been and they had experienced strange occurrences. Now the presence of the money brought them fresh dismay. "What is this that God hath done unto us?" Their own feeling of guilt, the sense of foreboding regarding some retribution hovering upon their horizon and their uncertainty because of these extraordinary events, all deepened their conviction that God was bringing punishment upon them for their evil-doing.

It was a sad hour when the aged father saw his sons returning, one missing, as had been true twenty years before. And when he saw the money in the mouth of each man's sack he was still more alarmed. And when they reported that the one condition for the release of Simeon or the purchase of more food was the taking of Benjamin before the viceroy, the father's cup of sorrow was full to overflowing.

"Me have ye bereaved of my children." It was his children that were disappearing, one by one, not theirs—and this explains Reuben's offer to pledge his own two sons as a hostage for the safe return of Benjamin. "Me have ye bereaved of my children."

"Joseph is not. Simeon is not. And ye will take Benjamin away? All these things are against me." He stated it as he saw it—he told the tale of his losses according to his own

measure of knowledge. But how inadequate his whole statement! Simeon was in perfect safety. Joseph was in high honor in the land of Egypt. All those things were *for him* and for the advancement of a sublime purpose; they were for the development of a movement destined to become world-wide in the scope of its beneficent influence.

Chapter XV

JOSEPH AND BENJAMIN

Genesis 43

Esau and Jacob were brothers, twin brothers, yet we find them setting interest over against interest in warring contention. Joseph and Benjamin were brothers, full brothers, for both were sons of the lovely Rachel in Jacob's home where four "sets" of children became the occasion of strife. And these two brothers nobly exemplify the strength and value of fraternal affection.

We have been following the fortunes of Joseph in a continued story. There are few characters in Scripture aside from the Lord Jesus to whom so much space is given. Here are thirteen full chapters in Genesis given to the personal history of this interesting young Hebrew. He runs through an entire "quarter," the narrative of his doings furnishing the leading article in every issue.

There is a certain fascination about any life which rises from obscurity to power. Whether the path lies from the log cabin of a railsplitter to the White House, from the tanyard to the head of victorious armies, or from the pit at Dothan to a palace on the banks of the Nile, there is something in the human heart which responds with sympathetic interest to the unfolding of such a life story.

The scene at the opening of the chapter is laid in Canaan, "and the famine was sore in the land." The faces of the people are pinched by the lack of food; the hungry animals look up in mute distress wondering why they are not fed.

The nine brothers find themselves hemmed in by rigid conditions which seem to forbid their seeking further supplies from Egypt. On the one hand, the ruler of Egypt had solemnly protested, "Ye shall not see my face except your youngest brother be with you; so shall your words be verified and ye shall not die." They were afraid to venture into Egypt again without Benjamin. On the other hand, Jacob, their father, said, in his sore distress, "Joseph is not and Simeon is not—ye shall not take Benjamin away." Truly the way of those transgressors was hard!

But hunger puts up a strong argument. The gnawing of need at their own vitals was multiplied by ten when they heard the cry of distress from their children. The pressure of the famine wore down the opposition of Jacob and he finally gave reluctant consent that Benjamin should go down with his brothers into that fateful land of Egypt.

Judah stood surety for him—"Send the lad with me and we will arise and go that we and our little ones may live and not die—I will be surety for him." Here is the selfish man who on the plains of Dothan counseled the sale of Joseph into slavery on the ground that it would be more profitable than murder! "What profit is it if we slay our brother and conceal his blood? Let us sell him to the Ishmaelites!" What changes time and pain and God's own grace have wrought in the tough moral texture of this rude shepherd! "I will be surety for him"—he stood ready to pledge his own life for the safe return of Benjamin.

We find as the expedition makes ready to start that Jacob has lost nothing of his faith in the power of property to grease the path of progress. We saw him at Jabbok Ford trying to appease the wrath of Esau by a skilfully offered present. Here he is saying, "Take of the choice fruits of the land in your vessels and carry down the man a present." The famine

was sore; the store of delicacies well-nigh depleted, but the need was urgent. And they took a present of balm and myrrh, spicery and honey, pistachio nuts and almonds! It would be an act of homage to the great man in Egypt as well as the gracious offering of delicacies from their own country.

When the caravan is ready to set forth, with Benjamin mounted upon his ass and headed toward that perilous country to the south, the aged father comes forth to give them his blessing. He has done all he could to make their way prosperous. He feels assured by the strong pledge given him by Judah. But another prayer will help. He will invoke upon this hazardous journey, taking from him the one remaining child of his dear Rachel, the favor of heaven. "God Almighty, give you mercy before the man." Here in this solemn hour is that unusual title given the deity which we heard when Abraham made this solemn covenant. "El Shaddai, give you mercy before the man that he may release unto you your other brother"—here his voice breaks—"and Benjamin." *Before the man*—if he had only known who "the man" was!

When they reached the land of Egypt they were again brought as mysterious looking foreigners before the viceroy. When Joseph saw that Benjamin was with them he directed that they be taken to his house to dine with him. "And the men were afraid because they were brought into Joseph's house." Stewing and simmering on the back of the mind of each man was that mess of wrongdoing, that sense of guilt, after all the lapse of years. In the face of each unexpected occurrence they felt alarm. They were "verily guilty concerning their brother," and every untoward circumstance seemed to bring its fresh accusation and its threat of penalty which soon or late must fall upon their heads.

> "Thus conscience doth make cowards of us all,
> And thus the native hue of resolution

Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pith and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action."

The continual dropping of the moral sense will wear away a stone. When the ten men were accused of being spies; when they were imprisoned for three days and then released with Simeon remaining in duress as a hostage; when they found the money in their sacks; and now still more when they found themselves, rough shepherds as they were, amid the polished suroundings of this ruler of Egypt, they felt that a mysterious force was at work preparing for their guilt some intricate form of retribution.

Their solicitude was heightened by the words of Joseph's steward. The ten men came near to the steward and explained the mysterious circumstance of finding their money in their sacks. They stood ready to return it, showing the other money they had brought to purchase grain. Then he bowled them over again by saying: "Peace be to you—fear not! Your God hath given you treasure in your sacks; I had your money." Here was an added assurance that the return of the money was a supernatural occurrence! His statement confirmed their feeling that some mysterious power was at work in their affairs because of that wicked deed on the plain of Dothan.

But they made ready their present and when Joseph appeared they offered it "and bowed down themselves to him to the earth." Here is what has come of all his dreams! Here are the other sheaves, bowing to his sheaf! Here are the other stars in the family avowing the fact that his star is in the ascendant!

We hear deep undertones of pent-up affection when Joseph addresses them. He spoke in the Egyptian tongue through an interpreter, but there are accents of love which overleap the barriers of speech. The tongues of men and of angels are

imperfect channels for the conveyance of those deeper messages which go from heart to heart—they are as sounding brass and clanging cymbal when set alongside the effective speech of love. "Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake?" "And they said, Thy servant, our father, is well." And again they bowed their heads and made obeisance.

"And he saw Benjamin, his brother, his mother's son!" He said, "Is this your youngest brother?" And overcome by tender compassion for the boy and for the ten men in whom he had seen the dawning of a better affection, he lost his self-control. "And Joseph made haste and sought where to weep; he entered into his chamber and wept there."

When the men were seated at table they found that they were placed according to their respective ages, "the first-born according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth." And again they marveled! They were surely in the hands of mysterious forces which had power to read the thoughts of the heart.

And when the ruler of Egypt singled out the youngest for special marks of his favor, sending him dainties from his own table according to the custom of the East, and sending five-fold more than he had sent to any of the rest, the occasion was not marred by any spirit of envy or grudging—"they drank and were merry with him." The spite and bitterness provoked by the gift of a coat of many colors bestowed as a mark of favor upon that other brother was now a thing of the past.

How strong and sweet is family affection where it fulfills the high office to which it is appointed! Joseph as a slave boy and Joseph as a prisoner, Joseph as ruler in Egypt and Joseph as the gracious host is by the power of family affection held to his course and enabled to work out for himself and for his family a history fragrant, beautiful and permanently useful.

Chapter XVI

JOSEPH TESTS HIS BRETHREN

Genesis 44

We are witnessing here what college fellows call "a try out." "The fining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold but the Lord trieth the hearts." The ten men passing under the scrutiny of Joseph and of the Lord are honest—they brought back the money they found in their sacks—are they also brotherly? They have a sense of guilt touching the treatment accorded a helpless boy on the plains of Dothan—Joseph heard them say in that hour of consternation, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother in that we saw the distress of his soul and would not hear"—would they upon occasion bear themselves in heartless fashion toward Rachel's other son? The viceroy proposes to test their feelings for Benjamin. He instructs his steward to place his silver cup—the instrument of divination, his most valued possession—in the sack of the youngest brother.

The ten men, unaware of the ordeal awaiting them, set forth in high spirits for the return trip to Canaan. "They were going back with corn enough for their children," says Marcus Dods, "proud of their entertainment by the lord of Egypt. They are anticipating their father's exultation when he hears how generously they have been treated and sees Benjamin as well as Simeon safely restored. They feel that in bringing back both Simeon and Benjamin they have almost compensated for bereaving him of Joseph. They are rejoicing together in a scarcely hoped-for success."

"Suddenly they are startled to see the hasty approach of the Egyptian messenger! They hear the stern summons which brings them to a halt. 'Wherefore have ye returned evil for good?'" In the sudden reaction from the mood of exultation into the mood of consternation and foreboding they protest their innocence with warmth. "God forbid that thy servants should do such a thing." They propose that the man with whom the cup may be found shall die and the rest be bondmen to the viceroy.

The story of the search is told with graphic directness. "They hasted and took down every man his sack to the ground and opened every man his sack. He searched and began at the eldest and left at the youngest. And the cup was found in Benjamin's sack!" It seemed the irony of fate that the stain of guilt should fasten upon this younger brother for whose safe return their very lives were pledged.

When the cup was found in Benjamin's sack they naturally believed him guilty of the theft. It was his first trip away from home. The glitter of the viceroy's palace had been too much, apparently, for his untried honesty or else the mounting ambition of inexperience had led him to purloin the divining cup that he might secure the mysterious power it represented. By one rash act this fondled youth has brought upon them all irretrievable disgrace if not extinction.

We can picture what would have been done had the ten men been of the same temper displayed at Dothan. But the distance in space from Dothan to Egypt was exceeded by the distance they had traversed in moral advance. They did not stop for recrimination or for discussion—they acted promptly as one man. "They rent their clothes and laded every man his ass and returned to the city."

There was a day when they were ready to allow Joseph to

go down into Egypt alone a slaveboy in the hands of the Ishmaelites to fare as he might. Now they will not allow Benjamin (guilty though he may be of actual theft) to be taken to Egypt to answer to the charge of stealing the silver cup found in his sack. They will stand together through good report and evil report. If one brother suffer, they will all suffer with him. They had known the time when they could cast their own flesh and blood into a pit and "sit down to eat bread." Now the look of pain on the face of this other boy with the finer sense of solidarity into which family affection had knit them, moves every man to saddle his ass and return to the city that together they may share his fate.

When they stood again before the viceroy this sentence was pronounced: "The man in whose hand the cup was found shall be my bondman. As for you, get you up in peace unto your father." They were free. They could set forth at once with food for their families, leaving Benjamin to reap as he had sowed. But not a man moved! They bear the same names they bore that day at Dothan, but their hearts have been changed by pain and peril, by the slow tuition of experience and the grace of the living God.

Judah drew near to the viceroy and uttered one of the finest bits of heartfelt, persuasive eloquence found anywhere in the Old Testament. It falls naturally into five parts, for the narrator has arranged his material with skill.

1. Judah humbly and graciously entreats the favor of the official while he makes his appeal. "Let thy servant speak a word in my lord's ears! Let not thine anger burn against thy servant for thou art even as Pharaoh."

2. He recounts the conversation which led them to bring Benjamin down into the land of Egypt. "My lord asked his servants, Have ye a father or a brother? We said, We have

a father, an old man, and a child of his old age who alone is left of his mother. And thou saidst unto thy servants, Bring him down."

3. He pictures in touching fashion the father's reluctance to allow the boy out of his sight—a reluctance overborne only by the stern stress of hunger in that distant home in Canaan. "Thy servant, my father, said unto us, My wife bare me two sons. One went out from me and I said, Surely he is torn in pieces; and I have not seen him since." (The ten men might say to one another when they were alone, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother," but Judah will not expose the family skeleton in the presence of this stranger by indicating what really became of the missing son.) "If ye take this one also from me, ye shall bring down my gray hair with sorrow to the grave."

4. He intimates that to return without the lad would be fatal to the aged father. "Seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life it shall come to pass when he seeth that the lad is not with us, he will die."

5. He states that he has become surety for the lad, pledging his own life for Benjamin's safe return; and he is ready to bear the boy's punishment in his stead that he may be released and returned to his father. "Let thy servant, I pray thee, abide instead of the lad, a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brothers."

Here is an address to judge and jury which well repays our study by its forensic quality. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" when it speaks at its best. Let the affections be deeply engaged and the simplest man rises into modes of address which show the elements of power. The words of Judah ring true because an honest love for his younger brother and for the aged father has taught his tongue the art of moving speech. We are not surprised to read in

the following verse that "Joseph could not restrain himself," but caused every man to go out from him that he might be alone with his brothers in that high mood of feeling to which the words of Judah had lifted all hearts.

"How long did it take you to prepare that sermon?" a shallow-pated admirer glibly asked Henry Ward Beecher one Sunday morning when a great congregation was going out after sitting in heavenly places with Christ Jesus. "Forty years," was the prompt reply, with a look that carried in it something of the stress and struggle, the travail of soul and unselfish affection which had made possible the message of the morning.

It took Judah twenty years to prepare the appeal he made that day to the ruler of Egypt. He never could have uttered anything approaching it when he pastured his flocks at Dothan.

The ten men scarcely knew that they had it in them to make such a sacrifice on behalf of Benjamin. They had been slowly building into their moral natures they knew not what. But when the demand came, they did not flinch. They showed that capacity for response to an ideal which is one of the choicest fruits of moral culture. When any man strives to walk in the path of humble, reverent obedience, he is laying up treasures of spiritual fiber which show forth resplendent when the day of declaring has fully come. "As thy day, so shall thy strength be." And as thy strength becomes, so shall the day come for it to stand revealed.

"Let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord." Here is the first clear intimation in this book of Genesis of the great vital doctrine of atonement. Judah believed Benjamin to be guilty of theft but because of his great love he will suffer in his stead, the just for the unjust. It is a red thread which runs through the pages of holy writ. We shall

hear Moses say, regarding the people who made the golden calf, "Forgive their sin—if not blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book." We shall hear Paul say, "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved. I could wish myself accursed from Christ for my kinsmen according to the flesh." We shall see the Son of God bearing our griefs and carrying our sorrows, wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities.

Chapter XVII

JOSEPH FORGIVES HIS BRETHREN

Genesis 45

"The long estrangement here happily terminated; the doubt and hesitation on Joseph's part at last swept away by the full tide of long pent-up emotion; the surprise and perplexity of the brothers as they scrutinized the face of the governor and discern the lighter complexion of the Hebrew; their anxiety as to how he means to repay their crime and the relief which comes with his expressions of good will—everything in short conduced to render this recognition of the brothers interesting and affecting."

Joseph had the sense of reserve touching the deeper feelings which goes ever with nobility of heart. "Cause every man to go out," he cried, when he was ready to reveal himself. "And there stood no man with him while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren."

His first word was dramatic. How it must have fallen on the ears of those men like a thunderbolt out of a clear sky. "I am Joseph!" What a striking situation! What a vindication of the one whose life had been characterized by integrity, purity, kindliness! What a day of judgment upon the wrong-doing of those ten men whose minds instantly ran back in breathless, fearful haste to that pit on the plain of Dothan!

The law of gravitation never forgets anything, never overlooks anything. It matters not whether it is a pound of feathers or a ton of lead or a planet, the power of gravitation is there working according to definite laws. If a man falls out of the fifth story window in New York, in Constantinople or

in Calcutta the power of gravitation is there and the man gets hurt.

The moral order never forgets anything nor overlooks anything. What men sow they reap, though the harvest be long delayed. "Be sure your sin will find you out," and assess upon you the penalty due. In some situation dramatic or commonplace the penalty for that wrong done years ago on some quiet plain of Dothan will stand before you powerful and threatening—it will say at last, "I am Joseph, whom ye sold."

We have all made bargains with the Midianites. We have all followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. And somewhere the inevitable retribution awaits our approach. Why did Lady Macbeth walk the floor through the long stretches of the night with wild, staring eyes, unable to sleep? Why was Arthur Dimmesdale unable to find peace until he took his stand beside the woman with the Scarlet Letter, confessing at last his common guilt with hers? Why was Judas Iscariot unable to find pleasure in his thirty pieces of silver? He came reeling into the Temple and flung the money on the floor with that heartbroken cry, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood"!

Why? Because each one lived in a moral order where the inevitable harvest of evil sowing must at last be painfully reaped. Now in one form and now in another each man's sin cries out at last, "Cause every one to go out," and there, face to face with the man's own guilt, it says in significant accents, "I am Joseph, whom ye sold." When that announcement fell upon the ears of the ten guilty men, we read, "His brethren could not answer him for they were troubled." It was as if the day of judgment suddenly yawned at their feet.

The viceroy had them absolutely in his power. They were strangers in a strange land. They had been accused of being spies come to spy out the nakedness of the land for some king

who might be meditating war upon Egypt. Had Joseph made known the fact that years before they had done a cruel, despicable wrong to him who now stood next to Pharaoh the ten men would have been torn to pieces by an angry mob.

But when he spoke the words which revealed his identity the accents in his voice did not denote vengeance. It was significant and prophetic that he did not say, "I am Joseph, the Prime Minister of Pharaoh, able to visit penalty upon you for your wrong-doing." He spoke in that mood which suffers long and is kind. "I am Joseph, your brother; come near unto me." The hand he stretched forth was not the mailed fist of vengeance but the open palm of forgiveness.

Alas for us all if there is nothing but that stern law of retribution! The law of gravitation neither forgets nor forgives—penalty for transgression is all it knows. And in the moral order there is stern penalty for evil-doing. But when we rise to the highest levels of that moral order and behold the promise and the process of redemption in the face and the work of Jesus Christ, we find a full-toned message of recovery. "If we confess our sins, He"—the One who is the sum of all those forces which make up the moral order—"is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." The magnanimous action of Joseph in that far-off time was prophetic and emblematic of the vaster work of moral recovery to be undertaken by One born of the same house and lineage.

We have all been in the far country wasting our energies in wrong ways of living. We come back ragged, footsore, disheartened. But the One who sees us while we are yet a great way off is the Father. He has nothing but words of welcome and pardon for the soul faced toward him. And the moment we appear in the strength of that new purpose we are invited to "Come near unto him" that we may eat the bread and drink the wine of reconciliation.

It was more than handsome for Joseph to direct the minds of those men in the hour of their humiliation away from the ugliness of their fault to the gracious results wrought by the overarching purpose of divine grace. "Be not grieved nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither. God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land and there are yet five years in which there shall be neither plowing nor harvest. So now it was not you that sent me thither, but God."

How splendid to hear these generous words fall from the lips of one who in the earlier chapters seemed a conceited, tale-bearing prig! "I am Joseph"—the same, yet not the same! There is identity in name but progress of being. The personal consciousness is one but his real content vastly altered for the better. "I am Joseph"—but Joseph enlarged, ennobled, softened, refined by the discipline of pain.

He was not content with forgiveness for the past—he extended them an ample opportunity for worthier living in the future. Canaan was stricken by famine. Drought had ruined the unhappy little country. The brothers of Joseph had neither food for their families nor pasture for their flocks.

But the storehouses of Egypt held food sufficient to carry the people through to another period of plentiful harvests. The land of Goshen, as a fertile spot in the Nile Delta, was near by, and these needy men were offered a home in that goodly section. In that hour of want Joseph stood to them for opportunity as he assigned them a settlement and sent wagons to Canaan to bring down his father and their families.

It is not enough that men should merely escape the just penalty for their misdeeds. It is not enough that the estrangement wrought between them and Him should be removed by His gracious forgiveness. The opportunity for each soul to so invest his powers as to show forth the reality of this change

of heart must come that wholesome exercise may bring these awakened powers to full maturity.

Here lies the deeper meaning of that Christian service to which we are called. The Almighty does not actually need us. With all the resources at his command, the hungry might be fed and the naked clothed, the ignorant might be taught and the good news proclaimed to every creature, even though we withheld our abilities from the great task.

But it would be our loss. The divine command to serve is a divine invitation to the highest privilege. We are invited to enter some land of Goshen and there under the gracious direction of One who stands above the Pharaohs fulfill the deeper possibilities of our natures through responsible service.

When we add it all up we find Joseph manifesting and mediating to us that higher something which lies at the basis of all moral advance. His action was more than a deed of personal kindness to ten unhappy men. He became indeed a forerunner and an anticipation of the Christ in whom are contained all the treasures of moral insight, of moral energy and of moral remedy.

In this splendid climax of the story Joseph became a type of that divine judgment which soon or late overtakes all wrongdoing, making it conscious of its guilt and helplessness. He became a type of that divine forgiveness which stands ready to wipe out old scores and establish penitent men in newness of life. He became a type of that gracious opportunity which awaits every soul coming in loving trust to the Father.

"I am Joseph whom ye sold," he cried in judgment. "I am Joseph, your brother—come near unto me," he cried in his glad offer of forgiveness. "I am Joseph, your brother—I will place you in the best of the land," he cried in his tender of a wide opportunity for that better life to which they were now summoned.

Chapter XVIII

JACOB BEFORE PHARAOH

Genesis 46

The fine filial affection of this successful son of fortune is one of the loveliest pages in the life of Joseph. "Honor thy father and thy mother"—the word had not yet been spoken from Sinai, but it was in full force, for the obligation is from everlasting to everlasting. "That it may be well with thee"—the first command with promise and the first to greet the awakening sense of moral accountability in the child! In the career of Joseph the sacred obligation was nobly met, the promise richly fulfilled.

When he commissioned his brothers to bring down his father into Egypt Joseph sent words of affection to cheer his heart and wagons laden with delicacies to minister to his comfort. When the returning expedition drew near to the borders of Egypt, "Joseph made ready his chariot and went up to meet his father in Goshen." When he again stood before him, "he fell on his neck and wept," for the deep wells of affection had not been dried up either by the adversity of those hard years when he had been Potiphar's slave nor by the prosperity of those glad years when he stood at Pharaoh's right hand. He then arranged to present his father at Court that the aged man might have the honor of meeting the mighty ruler of all Egypt—and the impressive scene is here nobly outlined. His fine filial affection found beautiful expression.

The moral forces here suggested are universal forces. In every age and land the wise and good son makes a glad father.

When Jacob saw the son whom he had long mourned as having met with tragic death by some evil beast on the road to Dothan, he was overwhelmed with joy. "Now let me die, since I have seen thy face." It seemed enough and he was ready to depart in peace. But his hour had not yet come—honors and pleasures awaited him at the hands of thoughtful, gracious affection. What a wealth of love and respect is contained in Joseph's word to his father—"I will go up and tell Pharaoh."

In Victor Hugo's story of the Bishop we are told that one day in an anteroom the saintly old man happened to meet the Emperor. Napoleon, noticing that the old man regarded him intently, turned around and said, brusquely, "Who is this goodman who looks at me?" "Sir," said Father Myriel, "you behold a goodman and I a great man. Each of us may profit by it." We have here an ancient replica of a similar scene drawn with a yet finer hand.

"Joseph brought in Jacob his father and set him before Pharaoh; and Jacob blessed Pharaoh"—goodness invoking the benediction of heaven upon greatness. "And Pharaoh said, How many are the days of the years of thy life? And Jacob said, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years. Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life."

The old man's response made up in courtesy what it lacked in accuracy. The days comprised within the compass of a hundred and thirty years could hardly be called "few." And for one who had passed over Jordan with only a staff in his hand to return presently "with flocks and herds, oxen and asses, manservants and maidservants and a very great household" those days would scarcely have been deemed "evil" by a thrifty Hebrew. But it was the correct thing to say to a ruler in a presentation at Court. It showed that Jacob understood the moves in the game of Oriental politeness.

But there may have been an undertone of sadness in this stately remark. The years however many they were may indeed have gone swiftly to this restless, stirring nature. And with the memory of lovely Rachel's untimely death and the bereavement suffered in the disappearance of his favorite son, with the moral disappointment experienced in the lives of the other sons touched upon suggestively rather than openly as he passes the members of his family in review in the "blessing" attributed to the patriarch in a later chapter, it may have seemed to that wearied heart that those days had been "evil."

The interview with Pharaoh was brief, as all such presentations are, but full of promise. Once more "Jacob blessed Pharaoh and went out from the presence of Pharaoh. And Joseph placed his father and his brethren *in the best of the land,* as Pharaoh had commanded." What a high privilege for the son to be able to do it! What serene joy he found in thus repaying that tender affection heaped upon him in his own thoughtless, callow youth so lavishly—too lavishly, perhaps, for his own good—with this beautiful consideration for the father's comfort in his closing years.

The impress of the character of this trusted viceroy upon the heart of Pharaoh and upon the life of Egypt seems to have been deep and lasting. He secured for his father a settlement in the best of the land. He won for those shepherds favor which served their interest well for years to come. It lasted, the narrative says, for four hundred years, until another king arose who knew not Joseph. The Lord shews mercy unto the children of those who love and honor him unto many generations.

When the time drew near for Jacob to die, he sent for Joseph to ask of him a promise attested by an oath. "If I have found grace in thy sight, put thy hand under my thigh. Deal kindly and truly with me. Bury me not in Egypt. When I

sleep with my fathers, bury me in their burying-place." Even in the best of the land of Egypt, he felt himself a stranger and a sojourner—when the end should come he would have his body laid to rest near the old home in the land of Canaan. And it was so.

But in those closing hours physically enfeebled though he was by great age, he shows the same alert and prophetic spirit which marked his career throughout. He gave direction that Joseph should bring his two sons to his bedside to be blessed. It is a gracious scene where the elder gathers up the best energies of mind and heart to re-enforce the younger for the tasks ahead.

In one of my pastorates it was my good fortune to succeed an honored minister of Christ who had served that same church for three and twenty years. His genuine worth and unwearied devotion had gathered to him the love and the loyalty of that people in royal measure. He still made his home in the parish, going in and out among his long-time parishioners—which is not always an unmixed blessing to the incoming pastor. But in this case it was a blessing unmixed—there was no trace of alloy. He placed his right hand upon my head, the love of his strong, pure soul upon my heart, and the benediction of his unselfish, supporting interest upon all my work. During all the years that followed, the presence of the older man was to the younger as a blessing of the Lord, making his life rich and adding no sorrow therewith. Here again I thank thee, John Knox McLean, and for thy gracious friendship I thank God!

When the two boys were brought to the bedside of Jacob, their father naturally placed the elder at Jacob's right and the younger on the left, indicative of the natural primacy of years. But Jacob "crossing his hands wittingly" placed his right hand of benediction upon Ephraim the younger and the left hand

upon Manasseh. When Joseph remonstrated, thinking his father had confused the lads, mistaking the younger for the elder, the energetic soul of that aged man insisted upon the superiority of his own judgment. "I know it, my son, I know it. He also shall become a people and he also shall be great, but truly his younger brother shall be greater." And again it was so. The succeeding history put its seal of approval upon the insight displayed in the conferring of this final blessing. There are men who see only with their eyes where other men see with their minds—and these see farther.

How stately are the words of that threefold benediction! It may be placed alongside the threefold blessing in the book of Numbers beginning, "The Lord bless thee and keep thee." Here the aged man laying his hands upon the head of untried youth thrice invoked the favor of heaven upon their unfolding powers.

"The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk,
The God which hath fed me all my life long unto this day,
The Angel which hath redeemed me from all evil,
Bless the lads."

Well may the ripened maturity of age invest the uncertain movements of inexperience with the benefits of its kindly interest and counsel. And the blessing upon Joseph is no less touching.

It is a family scene portrayed with fine insight and with great tenderness and delicacy of feeling. "And when Jacob had made an end of charging his sons he gathered up his feet into the bed and yielded up the ghost and was gathered unto his people."

"So be my passing,
My task accomplished and the long day done,
My wages taken and in my heart
Some late lark singing,
Let me be gathered to the quiet west,
The sundown splendid and serene."

PART II
THE STORIES OF TRIBES

Chapter I

THE TRAINING OF A LABOR LEADER

Exodus 1, 2

The migration of the Hebrew shepherds from famine-stricken Canaan to the borders of Egypt was attended with happy results. They had a friend at court in the person of Joseph, the viceroy. But here came three sharp strokes on the bell of time to mark the coming of a new era. "Joseph died and all that generation." "There arose a new king over Egypt who knew not Joseph." "And the Egyptians made the lives of the children of Israel bitter with hard bondage."

The ruthless monarch added to this ruthless oppression the sin of murder. "Pharaoh charged his people saying, Every son of the Hebrews that is born ye shall cast into the river." The execution of the fearful edict carried anguish far and wide, for the slave mother suffers when her baby dies as does the mother in the palace. The yellow Nile destined to run red as if stained with the guilt of cruel oppression along its banks became the scene of untold distress.

But the mother of one promising baby boy saved the life of her child—the child whose future action would mean the saving of a nation. "When she saw that he was a goodly child she hid him. But when she could no longer hide him" she laid him first in the arms of God by her prayer on his behalf and then upon the broad bosom of the Nile as if unwittingly launching him upon a career of wider usefulness.

This child was saved by womanly sentiment—first in the love of a mother, then in the watchful care of a sister and then

in the compassion of a pagan princess. There are forces which the science of physics knows not of which are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. The day-dreams of the mother are fashioned from the airy cobwebs of affection but they become as strong chains to bind this race of ours about the feet of God.

When Pharaoh's daughter came down with her attendants to bathe in the sacred Nile she saw this child in an ark of bulrushes at the edge of the stream. And "Behold the babe wept!" "One touch of nature makes the whole world kin"—Hebrew and Egyptian, bond and free, the wife of the slave and the daughter of the king! "The babe wept"—it was the appeal of our common humanity speaking to the universal heart in the language in which it was born. The womanly sympathies of the princess were at once enlisted and by the skilful promptings of the sister who had been watching near by the babe was given under royal sanction to its own mother that she might keep it and nurse it.

How little Pharaoh's daughter knew of what she was doing! How little any of us know! "The children of the kingdom are the friends of God building with Him they know not what. They have never known. Every unfolding of the divine life in them in the shaping of their own lives is a surprise." It doth not yet appear what we build, for we have here no continuing structure but we know that every honest effort is taken up into that vaster structure whose Builder and Maker is God.

The patronage of a royal princess brought this boy many an advantage, but his heart was unspoiled. "When Moses was grown he went out unto his brethren and looked on their burdens." His brothers still, royal favorite though he was, well removed from the grimy hardship of their sad lot! Sym-

pathetic ever—his eye not deflected by the repulsive features of the slave, but resting upon the unjust burden imposed!

How much of this high quality of heart was due to the influence of the slave-mother who bore him and nursed him? Great men have sometimes had great fathers—they have always had great mothers. Susanna Wesley and Nancy Hanks Lincoln are but representatives of an innumerable company of great-souled, warm-hearted, unselfish, devoted mothers who have given to the world forceful and aspiring personality competent to write noble pages of history in the civic and religious advance of the race. All honor to the mother of this young man who refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with his own than enjoy pleasures purchased by the iniquitous system of slave labor resting heavily upon the weary shoulders of his fellow-Hebrews!

His heart was true! He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, his personal escape from their hard lot never for one moment stifling his native sympathies. When he was come to years his first recorded movement was an act of participation in the ill fortunes of his race.

He saw an Egyptian taskmaster beating a helpless slave. His compassion for the oppressed flamed up instantly into hot resentment against the injustice of it. He sprung upon the oppressor and killed him.

It was a rough sort of animal courage, which he here evinced—to be replaced in his maturity by moral courage and a spiritual passion which burns but does not consume—yet we are not hastily to condemn this quick reaction against cruelty. God pity us if we should ever become so philosophical as to be incapable of fiery protest in the presence of cruelty. Highly tempered steel and highly tempered souls are alike demanded

in the presence of cancerous growths to be cut out of the social body lest they destroy it.

The day after Moses killed the taskmaster, he found two Hebrews quarreling. He undertook the rôle of a mediator. He said to the one who did the wrong, "Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow?" But the parties to the quarrel resented his interference—one of them cried, " Intendest thou to kill me as thou didst kill the Egyptian?" Human nature is touchy as to the way in which it will accept service rendered to its needs.

Moses realized that his deed of violence had been witnessed and he feared the result. Within an hour the authorities were after him—he was "wanted." They knew that one bold act of successful violence might precipitate a revolt of the slaves against their oppressors. This warm-hearted champion of the rights of the people had to flee for his life. Out through the desert he went and on into the peninsula of Sinai to escape the vengeance of Pharaoh.

When he reached the land of Midian "he sat down by a well." How far can we penetrate his mood? Was he under the juniper tree because of his discomfiture, saying, "I only am left as a friend of the oppressed and they seek my life to take it away"? He had twice attempted to befriend the oppressed and this was what came of it! Let the ungrateful dogs settle their own quarrels and fight it out to suit themselves!

But this was not his mood. The real stuff in the man is revealed by an incident trivial in itself but eloquent in its significance. While he sat by the well seven young women came and drew water, filling the troughs that they might water their flocks. But the rough Midianite shepherds came and undertook to drive away the flocks of the young women that they might have the water in the troughs for their own herds. Then the spirit of the protector in the heart of Moses came again to the front. He took part with the weak against the strong; he

enlisted for the right in its contest with the wrong, driving off the shepherds and securing for the women who were keeping their father's flocks the results of their own effort. He maintained the same chivalrous spirit, ready ever to intervene on behalf of the oppressed. When the bush shall burn with a mysterious fire and a divine voice shall issue from it, we shall find his heart burning with a desire to help.

We find this man destined to be a labor leader, thus early evincing those qualities which would make him competent to direct that industrial movement when the Israelites should throw off the yoke of slavery and set forth toward the land of opportunity. It was a movement social in its inception, the release of a band of slaves from the hands of their taskmasters, but it widened and deepened into an august moral enterprise.

The sojourn of Moses in the land of Midian where he was employed by a Kenite sheepgrower named Jethro, keeping his master's flocks and finally (quite in the vein of a modern story) marrying his employer's daughter, is full of significance. The simple, pastoral, outdoor life was a time of reflection and maturing. The hot indignation of youth at the sight of injustice came to be invested with deeper meaning and to be touched to finer issues. There were certain just grounds for the resentment he felt on the day when he killed the inhuman taskmaster, but it is not in this mood that the real work of social deliverance can best be wrought. Moses was called away into Midian that through years of useful labor and serious reflection he might develop those higher qualities which belong to the deliverer.

The work of social betterment cannot be undertaken in anger and hatred—it demands the spirit of moral faith. The energy adequate for this high task needs to show that it has stood on holy ground, putting its shoes from off its feet in reverent awe. It must indicate that it has seen the mysterious

fire which burns but does not destroy. It had best come bearing the commission of one who has heard a voice speak out of the Unseen, saying, "Come now I will send thee that thou mayest bring my people forth."

It might be well if the leaders of the I. W. W. could enjoy a season of reflection in the land of Midian. The idea that any individual who can talk loud and write with red ink should be encouraged to upset all existing arrangements in order to introduce some untried scheme of his own does not commend itself to the judgment of those who have the interests of the working people at heart. There are men who "undertake to doctor society on the strength of their own happy intuitions and their own love of hearing themselves explode"—and the epithet applied to those who attempt to practice medicine in the same rough and ready fashion is here in order.

We have all seen just causes go down in defeat for lack of competent leadership. There are facts enough in the minds of men and feeling enough in the hearts of men, but a lack of competent, far-seeing, trustworthy leadership! The hands on the clock of industrial betterment are repeatedly put back by those who can feel but not see. Unwise, unjust, violent blows are struck—with honest purpose it may be, but sure to react to the hurt of the cause represented. The sympathetic motive needs to be re-enforced, informed and directed by vast additions of study and experience. The patient application of economic intelligence, of social conscience and of instructive experience to problems too vast and too intricate for off-hand solution is one of the serious demands of our own day.

Chapter II

THE CALL OF A DELIVERER

Exodus 3

The Lord calls not the idle but the busy to service. Elisha was plowing, Nehemiah discharging his duties at the court of the king, Matthew collecting custom duties, Peter, James and John were fishing when the divine voice came summoning each man to a higher form of service. And here Moses leading his flock comes to Horeb, the mount of God, to be summoned by a mysterious theophany to his life work.

There had been a threefold preparation for this experience. He had been herding his sheep in the very region through which he was destined to lead the escaping Israelites. He had known a long period of reflection upon the principles and methods which underlie social well-being. He had come into contact with "Yahweh, the God of the Kenites." In that far-off time it was believed that Yahweh had his earthly residence at Horeb, "the mount of God."

When he led his flock along the slopes of Horeb he saw a bush burn with a mysterious fire. In those eager, darting flames, ever the symbol of the divine presence in the minds of the Semites, he saw the presence of Yahweh. He saw that agency which burns but does not consume, removing the dross and leaving the object of interest fine and pure.

"I will now turn aside and see . . . why." The approach of a reverent, awestruck interest, the mood of serious, thoughtful inquiry as to the deeper meanings which lie hidden within the symbols to be found on every mountain slope and in any

common pasture field! "And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called."

The mood of the flippant and the frivolous, the heat of the angry and the bitter are overborne and banished by such a vision. "Draw not nigh! Put off thy shoes! The place where thou standest is holy. I am the God of thy fathers." "And Moses hid his face for he was afraid." Here is an approach to the task of industrial deliverance which the hot-headed enthusiast angrily killing the slave driver on the banks of the Nile knew not of!

When the voice fell upon his attentive ear it spoke not of religious ceremony or ritual requirement; it spoke not of his own well-being and culture through some finer form of personal morality; it spoke of social oppression and of the need of divine help in the work of industrial betterment.

What deep notes are struck by the four successive statements—they are like the tolling of some distant cathedral bell. "I have seen the affliction of my people in Egypt." "I have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters." "I know their sorrows." "I am come down to deliver them." I have seen and I have heard; I know and I am come.

The assurance of the divine interest, the divine compassion and the divine readiness to aid is not merely ancient, it is modern—it is eternal. The details in that utterance belong to a remote situation, but the real content of it applies to the problems confronting us in this twentieth century. God sees and hears. He knows and he comes to deliver those whose lives are now made bitter by hard bondage, serving with rigor.

The people who have the sunny rooms in the social structure sometimes forget those who are doomed to dark corners on the north side of the basement. They "eat the fat and drink the sweet" with no disturbing consciousness of the needs of those for whom the present order prepares no satisfying portion.

And because of this selfish unconcern the divine voice may utter its message through the strident tones of some prophet with a harsher note. The very contentment bred of abundant possessions often dulls the cry of want without and deadens the sense of social responsibility. Yet all the while there is a still, small voice saying to those who have ears to hear, "I have heard and I have seen; I know and I am come to deliver."

Here in that far-off time was a vision of the divine concern for such homely interests as the toil of a race of slaves! God cares about these questions of wages and hours, of sanitary conditions in mills or mines, of the employment of women and children in those exacting industries which overtax their strength. Woe to the man who thinks that God is a God of etiquette, caring more for nice points of ritual and the delicacies of liturgy (to which some small measure of attention is given on one day in the week) than for those economic conditions under which his children toil for six days in the week.

It is significant that Moses, the great historic figure in the background of the whole Jewish and Christian movement, the one man to whom the beginnings of a definite moral law are referred, was called into the service of God by a direct appeal to his social sympathies. And in all the subsequent speeches and writings attributed to Moses we find no word of concern touching his personal salvation or his own blessed immortality —he was called to lose his life that he might find it by the investment of his powers in the industrial deliverance of his people.

In the face of the gigantic task we can understand his reluctance. "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh? Who am I that I should bring the children of Israel out?" What is any one man when he comes to pit his strength against a system of selfishness which has outlived whole generations of puny remonstrants!

Moses tried to beg off on the further ground that he was no public speaker. "My Lord, I am not eloquent! I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue." But he was instantly assured that this limitation did not disqualify him. It would seem as if the divine Author of this ancient labor movement in making choice of a suitable leader foresaw the fact that in the industrial agitation of the future the glib talkers would come unduly to the front, working detriment to the causes they espoused. The spell-binders and the silver-tongued agitators have frequently wielded a mighty influence which has not always made for the well-being of their admiring hearers. There are men less ready in speech but strong in patient, useful, constructive effort who will be appraised more highly when the books are opened than those who have sought to burn the opposition with flaming oratory.

The ground of hope lay in this great assurance—"I will be with thee." The mind runs ahead to the commissioner of another group of men for a yet vaster undertaking. When the disciples of Christ were sent forth to make known the good news of God to all nations the validating assurance was, "Lo, I am with you always."

When Moses essayed now for the second time to accomplish something for the oppressed Israelites it was the coming of a new type of man. The quick temper which slew the Egyptian and the rough chivalry which protected the women from the rude Midianites at the well were now replaced by a deep, calm sense of co-operation with God in an august moral enterprise. He was now moving ahead in the spirit of moral faith. He was ready to endure as seeing One who is invisible. He had caught a vision of the divine sympathy for all the struggling millions of earth. He was strong and serene in the sense of having given himself to the working out of a social ideal to which the energy of heaven was pledged.

The working people of our own time, serving ofttimes with rigor and made bitter by the exacting conditions of their toil, will be misled if they think that any permanent deliverance is to come through the guidance of red-mouthed agitators who would cast the moral and spiritual aside, making it merely a brute struggle for material advantage. They will be misled if they think that breaking the wrists of men who refuse to belong to their industrial sect, or dynamiting the homes of those who insist upon their right to work without the permission of a certain organization or destroying the property of those who fail to get their point of view, will advance the cause.

All such moral defiance and contempt for the spiritual, all such exaltation of hatred or desperate reliance upon the fierce thrust of self-interest alone, will fail—and it ought to fail. Before these blind impulses toward industrial betterment can succeed, they, too, will have to keep sheep in the land of Midian and stand with feet unshod on the slopes of Horeb. They will have to learn the mood and the method by which social progress is achieved.

It is no less true that those fortunate people who declaim over the glories of the "open shop" (not knowing what they say) and utter their contempt for the broken efforts of the toilers to secure a more democratic spirit in the control of the great industries, need a vision of the divine concern touching these matters and a clearer recognition of the priceless human values at stake in this huge business of producing wealth.

In this initial impulse which carried him into the work of social service Moses saw a solitary bush on the slopes of Horeb burn with a mysterious fire. He will live to see the day when the whole mountain will seem ablaze with the divine glory as he receives from the hands of the Most High those principles of righteousness which underlie all social advance.

Chapter III

THE WHIP OF GREAT CORDS

Exodus 4, 5, 6, 7

When Moses reached the land of Egypt he called together the elders of Israel. He rehearsed his experience at Horeb and announced his purpose. "And the people believed"—their poor, broken, despondent hearts made instant response to the magnificent ideal he held before them. "And when they heard that the Lord had looked upon their affliction they bowed their heads and worshiped." They were awed by the sense of the divine compassion for their unhappy lot.

When Moses appeared before Pharaoh he met with a different sort of response. The word of Moses was, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go." The insolent rejoinder of Pharaoh was, "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice and let Israel go! I know not the Lord." The pleadings are in and the issue is joined—now let the case be tried before the Judge of all the earth.

The sore oppression of the toiling people was not endured without remonstrance. When the tale of bricks was doubled, the people cried to Pharaoh, "Wherefore dealest thou thus with thy servants?" Nor was the protest voiced alone in human resentment—the word of the Lord rang out, "Let my people go that they serve me." This divine summons dealt with that which was more fundamental than the question of securing a more equitable return for their toil in food, clothing and other material advantage. It was God's own word of rebuke to industrial conditions inhuman and degrading; it was

his appeal to the powerful, prosperous class responsible for those conditions to change them forthwith. "Let my people go *that they may serve me*"—that they may live human lives, have homes worthy of the name, enjoy the social, intellectual, spiritual privileges belonging to normal existence!

The deeper meaning of industrial unrest is contained in that brief sentence which fell from the skies upon the astonished ears of Pharaoh. Divine sympathy is expressed—"My people." Not a horde of nameless slaves; not so many thousand "hands" herded together by a careless factory owner; not "the wage-earning class" of some chilly economist, but "My people!" The divine purpose for the toilers is there announced—"that they may serve me." It is the will of God that every life should grow tall and straight by the consecration of its powers to high ends. The demand for adequate opportunity is declared—"Let my people go." The struggling souls must be released from terms so hard as to defeat the divine purpose. In all the appeals of poet and prophet, essayist and reformer, we can hardly find a social message which bears upon its face more clearly the divine credential than does this ancient word of the Lord to Pharaoh—"Let my people go that they may serve me."

Did the monarch and the ruling class feel an instant throb of sympathy for the hard-pressed people? Did the fortunate members of society recognize their common humanity with the struggling millions who do the rough work of the world? Did there come to the strong a genuine sense of responsibility impelling them to deal humanely with those whose well-being was at their mercy? We know the answer which came back to this divine remonstrance—it was a heartless, insolent refusal! "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice and let Israel go?"

The same God who discussed economic questions with

Pharaoh on the banks of the Nile thirty odd centuries ago is still pressing home the same demand. He still requires the release of his people from conditions which cause the desire and the ability to serve him with the fullness of their powers to go down in defeat. And he will continue to press that demand until it meets with some adequate response. Injustice and inhumanity, when they become plain as current literature has made them plain to our generation, must be corrected or there will fall upon us the sore plagues of God's rebuke.

With his contemptuous refusal of justice to the helpless Israelites Pharaoh coupled this heartless statement, "Ye are idle, ye are idle." It was quite in the vein of the modern reproach dinned into the ears of the unfortunate poor. "You don't work. You don't want to work. It is your own fault that you are in want." We have heard men say that any industrious man who wants work can always get it.

The statement goes wide of the mark. The door to employment does not stand forever open nor does it swing easily on its hinges at the touch of willing industry. "Modern life has no more tragic figure than the gaunt, hungry laborer, wandering about the great centers of industry and wealth, begging for permission to share in that industry and contribute to that wealth, asking in return not the luxuries or even the comforts of civilized life but only such rough food and shelter for himself and family as would be practically assured to him in the rudest form of savage society."

Pharaoh hurled his contempt at the One who seeks the spiritual advance of his people. "Who is the Lord—I know not the Lord." His blunt word was fearfully accurate. He was unacquainted with the Lord who speaks through that prophetic discontent arraying itself against wrong industrial methods. "I know not the Lord"—by that haughty confession the hateful monarch is already predicting his downfall. He is

summoning those waves of judgment which will sweep over him and his host, swallowing them up in complete disaster.

There was a providential preparation for the movement toward freedom on the part of the oppressed Israelites in a series of public calamities which befell the land of Egypt. They probably extended through a series of years. We find them written up in didactic form to make dramatic presentation of the truth that the penalty of God falls upon such cruelty as that practiced by Pharaoh upon the helpless Israelites. The moral content of the narrative is clear, bringing out the varying response which the divine order makes to right and to wrong approach.

The form these calamities took was such as to humble and dishearten the Egyptians and to produce in the minds of the oppressed Israelites the conviction that the Power behind all phenomena was strongly enlisted on their side. The mood of that earlier time would more readily interpret the extraordinary occurrences in terms of religious value.

The water of the Nile ran red as if blood-stained with guilt by the inhumanity along its shores. The annual overflow was followed by the spawning of frogs upon the wet fields in such unprecedented numbers that they became an offense. There came seasons when myriads of lice and of flies and of locusts, covering the whole face of Egypt, became a frightful pest. Then a grievous murrain broke out among the cattle, followed by an epidemic of boils.

Still later one of those sand storms which darken the sky of Egypt until one can scarcely see his hand before him swept in from the desert. The city on the Nile groped in a darkness that could be felt. Then a hail storm stripped the trees of their foliage, the fields of their crops. All these visitations came with a certain progressive intensity giving a cumulative effect. The narrative seems to be the work of an artist who

gathered up, summarized and put in splendid literary form his material regarding the series of calamities, to make vivid the truth that God's judgments fall heavily upon selfish inhumanity.

The moral content of these impressive narratives is altogether valid. The ruler, the slave-owner or the employer guilty of injustice and cruelty may not be overtaken by such calamities as are here described, hailstones and darkness, lice and locusts, grievous boils and deadly murrain. But selfish inhumanity in organized life, ancient or modern, will be stung and bitten by myriads of annoyances; it will be made sick and sore by the outbreak of social disease.

What is yet more serious, the reaction of inhuman and oppressive industrial methods upon the man who practices them in the hardening of his own heart, in the lowering of his ideals and in the blight upon his soul, is disastrous beyond anything suggested in this narrative of physical calamity.

God's judgments upon men for the contempt they show for the ideals he holds before them come now in one form and now in another—the chariots which bear the divine penalties are twenty thousand—but they surely come. The stately procession of his great rebukes is never long delayed. Down through the ages he has been steadily calling to those men who were dealing harshly with their fellows, "Let my people go that they may serve me!"

Here in our own land we have what is called "the white plague." The deaths from smallpox and cholera, from diphtheria and scarlet fever are insignificant when compared with the steady ravages of tuberculosis of the lungs. If the present death rate from that one malady is not reduced by better sanitary conditions and by more efficient methods of treatment something like one in eight of the present population will fall a victim to that dread disease. The peril which confronts

society in the presence of these myriads of death-dealing germs is one of the grave problems of medical science.

When the Tenement House Commission made its report several years ago the fact was noted that there were 20,000 consumptives in the tenement houses of New York City. The sputa from the diseased lungs become dry and are blown about with the dust of the street into offices and stores, into street cars and railway trains, into the open windows of the well-to-do. The poor consumptives have not been instructed touching their responsibility to society as possessors of such a disease. They work on from sheer necessity in the sweat-shops making neckties, boys' clothing and underwear for the trade, stitching into the garments they make the sentence of death to be sent out broadcast.

And what does this menace to the national health mean but an embodiment of the truth contained in this old narrative of Exodus! God be praised for microbes and bacilli! They promote human sympathy and the sense of responsibility. They preach the gospel of brotherhood saying in tones which compel people to listen: "We are all members one of another. If one member suffer all the members suffer with it." Out of those damp, dark tenements, with the pinched faces, narrow chests and hollow coughs the voice of God issues, saying today as he said of old, "Deliver my people from these inhuman conditions!"

The calamities which fell upon Egypt were of such a nature that they struck directly at the heart of Pharaoh's system of faith and practice. It was no ordinary river which became vile and unfit to drink—it was "the sacred, solitary, beneficent Nile, the life of the state and the source of all fertility." It was upon no common race of men but upon "the cleanliest of all ancient peoples" that there came the flies and the lice, the stench of frogs and the plague of boils. It was not merely

the common beasts of the field but the sacred bull Apis which groaned under the grievous murrain. When these calamities fell upon the land, Pharaoh felt himself mocked by some mysterious foe.

The courage of the oppressed Israelites grew mightily during these calamities. A power not of man was hurling its rebukes against their oppressors. The huge system which held them in its grasp had seemed too powerful to be overthrown, but now it was shaken like a reed in the wind. The various events as they occurred were interpreted by their leader and the people felt the full force of it when at last he said, "The Lord shall fight for you and ye shall hold your peace." The Great Ally was drawing up his forces, tempest and darkness, plague and pestilence, disease and death. With such a mighty re-enforcement to their strength the hour of deliverance would surely come.

Finally, when Pharaoh's first-born son, the heir to the throne, died, and when other deaths throughout the land had filled the masters of those slaves with a mighty dread of some unseen foe enlisted against them, Moses was ready to call upon the people to rise and follow him in a splendid effort to accomplish their freedom. They responded to his call. In an hour of high resolve they threw off the yoke of bondage and set forth for the land of promise.

Chapter IV

THE BIRTHDAY OF A NATION

Exodus 12, 13, 14

The separate corporate existence of the Hebrew nation was thus early linked up with a great religious festival. The day in their political calendar which corresponded to our Fourth of July was not given over to thoughtless noise and careless dissipation—it was sanctified by thanksgiving and prayer. The joy of the churchman and the enthusiasm of the patriot were as the right and left hands of a common satisfaction.

"This month shall be unto you the beginning of months—it shall be the first month of the year to you." They were to reckon time from that signal display of the divine mercy which brought them deliverance from the bondage of Egypt, from the angel of death and from the sense of alienation from God. They were to make all their future reckoning from the beginning of that life which was life indeed.

When they threw off the yoke of bondage and set out for the land of promise they made their start in the darkness and cool of the night. Out from those scenes where they had suffered in mind and body to the enfeeblement of higher purpose and the dwarfing of the spiritual nature, they marched away toward the place of freedom. How far it was none of them knew! They were uncertain as to most of the steps to be taken but they moved ahead, feeling within their hearts that divinely implanted impulse which became at last like a guiding pillar of cloud and of fire.

"The Lord led them not by the way of the land of the Philis-

times, although that was near." The short cut from Egypt to Palestine would have brought them to their new responsibilities without the requisite preparatory training. They were divinely commanded to take the long road which meant years of patient discipline in the wild life of the rugged steppes and a long, educative encampment at the foot of Sinai, to the end that they might be trained and fitted for the obligations which would face them when they reached the land of promise. The ready-made programs and panaceas for social ills enthusiastically offered in our day, which leave out of the account the gradual development of the higher type of man needed for the working of the new *régime* proposed overlook this prime necessity. The Holy City must come down out of heaven from God through the efforts of holy citizens.

The next evening they were one day's march upon the road. When night fell they were encamped by a narrow arm of the Red Sea. Here before them was the dividing line between the old life and the new! To cross this boundary was to pass from Africa into Asia. It was to pass from Egypt with its mighty river and huge structures, its bull worship and grinding oppression, its elaborate, burdensome and unprogressive civilization over into Asia, the home of spiritual ideals, the birthplace of all the great religions of the world.

The continent of Asia has shown itself pre-eminently the home of religious faith, moral vision and spiritual insight. Hinduism and Buddhism, Confucianism and Shintoism, Mohammedanism, Judaism and Christianity are all of them Asiatic in their origin. The One who has taken the moral government of the world upon his shoulder as none other ever has was born and reared in Palestine on the west coast of Asia.

The Israelites in crossing the arm of the Red Sea were passing over into the seat and home of spiritual vision. The

splendid history of religious faith here indicated was, in large part, yet to be enacted, but the eyes of One who is from everlasting to everlasting looked out of the cloud that night upon the scattered hosts recognizing the sublime significance of the passage of his chosen people from Africa into Asia.

How much it meant for their future development to emerge, crude and untaught though they were, into the presence of spiritual ideals! In the slavery of Egypt there was no vision and the higher life of the people perished. But in the land of promise they would be brought under the appeal of lawgiver and priest, of the poet and the prophet. Commonplace though their lives were as they wandered in the wilderness, as they fought for a footing in the land of Canaan, as they slowly developed their institutions in the land the Lord had given them, they were under the tuition of men of spiritual insight. They were learning to relate their lives to a far-reaching divine purpose which gave those humdrum activities a nobler significance.

In crossing that arm of the Sea they were also passing from a state of slavery where the responsibility for their support rested with others to a condition of freedom where the responsibility would become their own. They were forsaking the fat delta of the Nile, with its leeks and onions, its melons and its cucumbers, for the rugged life and the scantier fare of the steppes. It was a night much to be observed for its bearing upon the destiny of a people striking this initial blow for industrial and political freedom.

There on the shore of the Red Sea they paused in their flight and pitched their camp. But as the sun went down there arose upon the western horizon a cloud of dust. And then they saw in the distance the horses and chariots of Pharaoh's army in hot pursuit!

The loss of that abundant supply of cheap labor was not to

be endured by the ruling class. The calamities had passed and the sky had cleared. The militia was therefore ordered out to bring the fleeing Israelites back and fix them in again in hard bondage. The dust of the hateful pursuers in their forced march rose upon the horizon in the evening light and the Israelites were sore afraid.

Instantly there went up a cry against Moses and against the whole undertaking for industrial betterment. Let difficulty arise and the fickle, faint-hearted people cry out against the brave attempt. "Because there were no graves in Egypt," they shouted to their leader, "hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?" It was a bitter taunt. "No graves in Egypt"—that land of tombs where the interest in the dead overshadowed the claims of the living, even as the Pyramids of the dead towered above the homes of the living. Horrible slaughter for all who did not submit seemed inevitable.

But Moses stood up bravely reassuring the shuddering people by his confident promise of divine aid. They were obeying a divine impulse in seeking to make the conditions of their lives ennobling rather than degrading. They were following a pillar of cloud and fire in their quest of a life worthy to be called human. They had a right to expect the powerful aid of One who encouraged the moral venture. Their devoted leader in the face of impending danger cried to them in high confidence: "Fear not! Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord! He will work for you today! The Egyptians whom ye have seen, ye shall see no more forever! The Lord shall fight for you and ye shall hold your peace."

Then above the roar of the storm (for the narrative says there was "a strong east wind all the night") and above the tumult of the frightened people, there sounded forth the voice of the Great Ally. "Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward."

Here was a command to attempt the impossible! They were hemmed in. On the right hand and on the left were the sand-hills of the desert where flight was impossible. Behind them the horses and chariots of Pharaoh's army driving furiously! Before them lay the arm of the Red Sea. Yet there was the divine command "Go forward," as if He were mocking them in their peril.

Futile as the attempt seemed, they broke camp at the command of their leader. The line of march was formed with the leaders faced toward the sea. The word was, "Forward." Then "the strong east wind" blew back the waters in that arm of the sea until it was shallow enough for them to cross. Into the bed of the sea they marched and there amid the roar of the wind and the flying foam—for Paul tells us "they were all baptized unto Moses in the Cloud and in the sea"—they went steadily forward by the divine command.

Before daybreak the Israelites were safely across. But the Egyptians having come up during the night drove wearily across the wet sea floor, their heavy chariot wheels clogged with the mud. They groped their way in thick darkness as if dimly conscious of some impending doom. Suddenly the fierce wind shifted and the waters scurrying before the blast returned to their place. Thus the whole detachment of Pharaoh's army was drowned in the sea before it could escape.

The author has given us apparently a splendid poetic treatment of this remarkable incident. "The strong east wind" is God's chosen instrument. The early Hebrews were accustomed to say of the winds, the waves and all the forces of the physical order, "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation?" They believed that the entire physical order was the perpetual servant of moral purpose.

The whole event is striking in its symbolism. Poets,

prophets and composers have in turn utilized the various features of it in representing spiritual crises. Here and there in the unfolding moral history of mankind the souls of men have fled from conditions intolerable only to find themselves confronted by yet graver obstacles. And when every earthly resource seemed to be cut off, their very helplessness and desperation led them to look with new faith toward the unseen source of aid. And then somehow, by the hand of God rather than by the hand of man, a way was opened for them in the midst of the deep for a further advance into the land of promise.

Chapter V

THE FOOT OF MOUNT SINAI

Exodus 19, 20

"There Israel camped before the Mount." The Mount was Sinai and the hour had struck for a searching and instructive experience. The Israelites had seen the Lord of all the earth scourging the oppressor with a whip of great cords in the ten plagues. The sea had opened before them to facilitate their escape and then had overwhelmed their enemies. They had been fed from the table of heaven. Now they were to learn that neither men nor movements live by bread alone—they live by all the words which proceed out of the mouth of God.

The escaping Israelites must be brought to realize that they were to live henceforth by those great words thundered forth from the top of Sinai touching the sacredness of life and purity, truth and property, family ties and religious obligations. Every movement for human betterment, if it is to result in any permanent advance, must feel the reign of moral law and the strong grip of moral obligation. It was imperative that this ancient labor movement should thus early in its progress pitch its camp beneath the shadow of Sinai.

The natural features of the region tended to increase the religious suggestiveness of the situation where the Israelites found themselves. Up out of a bare, rugged plain rose the Mount of God like a huge, natural altar. Black clouds were seen to rest upon its top as if some heavenly visitant veiling his glory in the thick darkness had descended upon the Mount. The people who had lived all their lives in the flat delta of the

Nile were profoundly impressed by the very sight of such a mountain.

It is also a region of terrific storms. The wind roars through the rocks like the blast of trumpet. The fierce glare of the lightning and the crash of thunder give the impression of supernatural power. The symbols of an awful, unapproachable glory pertaining to the deity whom they were bidden to trust were ever present. We can understand how these phenomena would fill the hearts of uninstructed slaves, hitherto unaccustomed to either mountains or storms, with a profound sense of mystery and awe.

They were ready and expectant on the third day as Moses had commanded them. "And it came to pass on the third day in the morning there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the Mount and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud so that all the people in the camp trembled." The terrible storm was at its height. "And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God." Would he appear to them, they wondered, in any visible form? Would he stand at the top of the Mount as a winged figure like the gods of the Assyrians or as a huge bull like the gods of Egypt? The minds of the people were eagerly anticipating the appearance of the mysterious being who was to reveal himself.

But when Moses, their representative, had gone to the top of the Mount and had returned, neither he nor they had seen any shape or form. "Ye came near and stood under the mountain and the mountain burned with fire. And the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire. Ye heard the voice of the words but saw no similitude. Ye only heard a voice." Moses came back with no visible image of the divine in his hand or in his eyes or in his heart—he bore simply those elements of the moral law which stand as the expression of the divine will.

The Israelites were to have no other gods save the One who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. They were to guard the sacredness of that faith in a Deity Unseen by the avoidance of all idolatry—"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image." They were to hold sacred His ineffable name by never uttering it profanely. They were to set apart for rest and for worship one day in every seven that the sanctifying influence of this holy time might come to pervade all their time.

Then straight on into the fundamental human relations proceeds this ancient code. Family ties are sacred—"Honor thy father and thy mother." Human life is sacred—"Thou shalt not kill." Purity between the sexes is sacred—"Thou shalt not commit adultery." Property is sacred—"Thou shalt not steal." Truth is sacred—"Thou shalt not bear false witness." All the interests of thy fellows are sacred—"Thou shalt not covet anything that is thy neighbor's."

Simple and elementary these injunctions are, but at a time when other religions, with their "gods many and their lords many," with unwholesome traditions about the celestial escapades of their deities and debasing stories of their wayward goddesses, were full of superstition and uncleanness, these early commands shine with a wondrous splendor. The disregard for life and purity, for truth and property, made moral progress difficult, and it becomes an evidence of genuine inspiration that early in the history of Judaism it embodied so many vital, fundamental and enduring moral concepts in its accepted code.

These commands, simple as they are, stand as a genuine expression of a moral order, august, cosmic, eternal, under whose beneficent rule all men and all movements for industrial betterment must be brought if they are to reach the land of promise.

The memory of these great days at Sinai never faded from

the memory of those Israelites. They made their blunders and were guilty of wrong-doing, for they were men, and not angels. But through all the succeeding years there was a growing feeling that the main office of religion was not to confer personal advantage, either present or prospective, by the use of the proper magical ceremonies to propitiate the deities—the main office of religion was to train men to do right in all their dealings with their fellows.

The idea that God is pleased with righteousness and with nothing else was by no means common in those early days. It is not so universal today in religious thought as to be entirely commonplace. It was prophetic that the rude stone tablets on which they chiseled the divine commands—so simple at first as to be called "The Ten Words"—were kept in a place of honor in the ark of the covenant; that they were carried along by the people in their wilderness wanderings! And on the first approach to the land of promise they were borne by the priests at the head of the marching host, fit symbols of that moral order to which they were to look for guidance.

The need of this moral imperative is felt everywhere. The cry is for men who feel the steady pressure of those moral obligations which belong to an eternal order. In the highly intricate problems forced upon us by changed industrial conditions; in the vast questions of housing, of sanitation, of proper food supply for mighty cities; in the everlasting fight against dirt and disease, against vice and crime; in the warfare against greed as right-minded men undertake to keep its ugly clutch from the throats of the weak, we have need of men who see the moral principles involved in all this as Moses saw God at the top of the mount.

We have achieved a certain measure of personal and private morality. We need today the more thorough social application of the Ten Commandments, with all the authority of Sinai be-

hind them, to enable us to build here a nation of free men, organized in righteousness and acting in the spirit of intelligent good will, to usher in that order of life worthy to be called the kingdom of God.

Chapter VI

THE GOLDEN CALF

Exodus 32

How impatient were those "children" of Israel! "When the people saw that Moses delayed"—he was waiting upon the Lord at the top of the mount, but the hasty souls of the people, on lower levels of thought and feeling, could not tarry for the results of such high communion. While he tarried they said to Aaron: "Up, make us gods. As for Moses, we wot not what is become of him."

Here they were at the foot of Mt. Sinai, the favored witnesses of glorious manifestations of the divine. But straight in the face of this open vision of the moral order and of the divine favor which would rest upon them if they observed it, there came this disgraceful falling away.

It is painful to see some noble movement "staining the even virtue of its enterprise" by a great moral lapse. Here the absence of that visible leadership which their hearts craved became their undoing. They would have some visible, tangible, manageable representation of the divine. "Up, make us gods to go before us!"

God in the skies ceased to influence them. Moses at the top of the mount failed to retain their allegiance. It is the leadership brought near and made effective by being made flesh which enlists the loyalty of the mass of the people.

The same sore need is constantly manifested among the toiling and burdened children of America. The leadership they crave must come home to them in the familiar terms of their

own experience. An angel of economic wisdom sitting comfortably apart in a well-endowed university chair, or an archangel of piety standing in a well-sustained, well-guarded pulpit, lecturing the humble toilers on their various shortcomings, will never suffice. The people desire for their leader one who has himself done rough work, earned his bread by the sweat of his brow, kept warm his sympathies with the wage-earners by sharing their lot. He is able to declare his message in the language in which they were born, and point the way of advance by walking in it on his own two feet. For lack of that form of leadership, present and convincing, the working people still go off after false gods and degrade their high contention by the debasing idolatry of force.

In response to the foolish request of the mistaken Israelites, Aaron took their ornaments of gold and fashioned for them a golden calf. The form of the idol was naturally determined by the influence of an earlier environment. In Egypt they had witnessed the worship of the sacred bull, Apis, with all the stately ritual of that ancient cult. Aaron therefore set up this golden calf, and made proclamation, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up."

The Israelites in the Nile delta had seen the ruling and successful classes under whose power they had toiled worshiping the sacred bulls, and the power of that example was still strong upon them. They sang and danced before the golden calf. In the excessive ardor of religious feeling they cast aside their loose garments, dancing half naked in unseemly fashion, like the dervishes of the East, before this god of gold. They prostrated themselves before it in a groveling reverence. It was a horrible and a saddening sight which met the eye of Moses as he came down the side of the mount.

Yet there was nothing surprising in it. Bull worship was a leading feature in the devotions of the most successful people

the Israelites had ever known. Have we any valid reason for our boasted superiority? Let the well-to-do people of any nation preach the gospel of materialism, saying by those actions which speak louder than prayers that big dinners and fine clothing, palatial homes and costly entertainment, expensive yachts and high-priced automobiles are the main things in life, and the same result follows. Let them say, "These be the gods which bring happiness and peace"—and inevitably the ideas of the toiling people will be materialized.

Let the gods of gold be set up by the leaders of society in the place of intelligence and aspiration, and ere long a large part of the nation will be prostrated in the degrading worship of material success. Materialism as a philosophical system has become so poor that few thinkers, intent upon fundamental problems, do it reverence. But materialism as a moral tendency in shaping ideals and in determining lines of action is active and powerful. "These be thy gods," men are crying in many quarters, touching those values which can be had for gold.

Moses came down the mountain side, his eyes aflame with anger as they rested upon the ugly idolatry, his heart heavy with discouragement over the fickleness of those favored people.

With blanched face Aaron entreated him: "Let not the anger of my lord wax hot. Thou knowest this people that they are set on evil. They said, 'Make us gods,' and I said, 'Whosoever hath any gold let him break it off and bring it to me.' And I cast it into the fire—and there came out this calf."

"Aaron was frightened at what he had done. He was afraid of the act itself and he was afraid of what Moses would say about it. Like all timid men, he trembled before the storm he had raised. He tried to persuade Moses, and perhaps in some degree to persuade himself, that it was not he that had done this thing. He lays the blame upon the furnace. 'The fire did

it,' he declares. 'I cast the gold into the fire and there came out this calf.' He will not blankly face his sin, and yet he will not tell a lie in words. He tells what is literally true, but he leaves out the one important point, his own personal agency in it."

In like manner men today are constantly casting the blame for the evil results wrought by their own sin upon environment, upon bad companions, upon the spirit of the age. "Everywhere there is the cowardly casting off of responsibility upon the dead circumstances around us. It is a very hard treatment of the poor, dumb, helpless world, which cannot answer to defend itself."

But Moses sharply reprimanded Aaron for his share in this moral lapse. He broke up the idol and burned it in the fire. He censured his brother and the groveling people in words that are like live coals. And no apology is needed for that expression of wrath. Hatred of evil, hot and terrible, is but the reverse side of the love of good.

Had Moses softly acquiesced in the worship of the golden calf the high moral purpose which characterized this movement at the outset would have faded out. The Hebrews would have lapsed into wandering tribes, worshiping the bull of brute force or prostrating themselves before the material value of a golden idol. In the absence of a fundamental, commanding and ever-enlarging moral ideal, this ancient labor movement would have ended in dismal failure.

Is there not today a like need of resolutely calling the people away from the unseemly idolatry of material success and of facing them toward those spiritual ideals which alone insure permanent well-being? The yellow god still has his devotees, and the quality of life which issues from such unworthy deification of material values is "yellow" indeed. The Lord was ready to make kings and priests of those people when they

made fools of themselves. He stands ready to make of us "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people," in the exalted spiritual service we may render to the nations of earth, but this mission will go down in utter defeat if the passion for gain and the desire for material luxury rule the lives of the more generously endowed.

In the conversation of the home and in the prevailing spirit of social life, in the discussion of industrial problems and in the voice of literature, in the real aims of the university and in the teaching of the churches, there needs to come a profound and resolute turning away from slavish allegiance to the ambition for material accumulation, and a fresh summons to the definite worship of the living God.

The spiritual impulse lies at the heart of all the splendid efforts of the race for genuine advance. Monopoly, luxury and moral indifference destroyed the Roman empire, because they introduced and exalted idols which were not meant to be the objects of man's fundamental allegiance. And the unwholesome idolatry of an outward success (often unjustly and unworthily achieved in modern times) must yield to nobler aspirations in the market and in the polling place, in the counting room and in the attitude of the press, in the ambitions of the student and in the upward look of the worshiper, if we too are not to meet with a similar fate.

What a world of sympathy and of spiritual passion there is in the prayer of Moses on behalf of this deluded and sinning people! "The people have sinned a great sin and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin" —here his voice breaks and the sentence is punctuated with a sob—"and if not blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book." Here is the good shepherd, willing to lay down his life for the sheep and going forth in the wilderness after the lost sheep *"until he finds it."*

Chapter VII

THE POWER OF A RESOLUTE MINORITY

Numbers 13-17

When the children of Israel drew near to the land of promise their leader sent scouts ahead to spy out the land. He sent twelve honorable men, one from each tribe and "every one a prince." "See the land, what it is," he said to them. See whether the people be few or many, strong or weak, dwelling in camps or dwelling in strongholds! See whether the land be fat or lean and bring of the fruit thereof! It was an expedition of reconnoiter to bring back information upon which he might wisely plan his further movements.

The men went forth and were gone for an indefinite period —"forty days" the writer says, according to the custom, not knowing exactly how long they were gone. And they brought of the fruit of the land, for it was the time of ripe grapes. And the land was so productive that one huge bunch of grapes was placed upon a stick and borne between two that it might not be crushed nor bruised. And along with the exhibit of the products of the land they made their varying reports.

How clearly the truth is brought out that every man sees what he has eyes to see! He sees what he has the mind and the heart to see, for genuine seeing is less a question of eyesight than of insight. The reflex which any given set of realities produces upon a conscious subject depends in great measure upon what was borne upon the field.

The ten men brought in their report. It was the judgment of an overwhelming majority. It was the opinion of ten

against two. The wisdom of this world would have instantly recognized the folly of flying in the face of such a preponderance of opinion. The two men brought in the minority report which after all contained the key to the situation.

The two reports agreed in certain particulars and disagreed in others. They both asserted that the land was most attractive and desirable. "It floweth with milk and honey and this is the fruit of it."

The two reports agreed in naming the serious obstacles to be encountered in the conquest of the land. "The people that dwell in the land are strong and the cities are fenced and very great. We saw the sons of Anak there (the noted giants of that region), and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers and so we were in their sight." The ten men gave utterance to this catalogue of difficulties and the difficulties were not denied nor minimized in the report of the two.

The reports differed when they came to reckon up the available resources for conquering the land. The ten in their cowardly distrust looked down at their own puny strength and in the presence of those fierce giants the sense of their own importance shrank and shrank until the mightiest man among them was scarcely as large as a grasshopper. The two men looked up to the Lord of Hosts and in that open vision of an Unseen Ally lending his mighty aid to the furtherance of a moral undertaking, the available resources seemed adequate. "Let us go up at once," the two men cried, "for we are well able to overcome it."

Here is the everlasting difference set like a wall of partition between belief and unbelief! The heart of distrust causes the sense of resource to shrink until the doubting soul feels like a grasshopper. The heart of distrust magnifies the difficulties in the way of advance and conquest until these sons of Anak seem taller than Bunker Hill Monument. It is faith, faith in

oneself, faith in one's fellows, faith in God, which enables Gideon and Barak, David and Samuel, Livingstone and Lincoln, Wilfred Grenfell and Robert A. Hume to subdue kingdoms and work righteousness, to quench violence and obtain promises, to wax valiant in fight and turn back the armies of aliens. God be praised for men who believe something!

The two men had eyes to see, minds to understand and souls to sense the power unseen. They knew that the facts were not all apparent on the surface. When the ten men added up their column of figures, giving full place to the walled cities, the giants and all the rest, they left out of the result the most significant item in the trial balance they were assaying. They left out God.

It was no dare-devil, Jesse James spirit which fired the hearts of the two, causing them to urge an immediate advance into the enemy's country. It was their profound belief in that moral purpose which runs through history, their faith in God of whose life that moral purpose is a steady expression. "The land we passed through is an exceeding good land. If the Lord delight in us he will give it unto us. Fear not the people of the land—their defense is removed from over them and the Lord is with us. Fear them not."

How the fickle Israelites were depressed by the voice of the majority! Thus numbers make cowards of us all and the pale cast of resolution is sicklied o'er by an array of figures! The timid politician is more afraid of a thoughtless mob which can howl, or of a yellow journal claiming "the largest circulation," which can shriek in headlines and red ink, than of those quiet, resolute souls whose life purposes blend with an Infinite Will. "It's ten to two—what can I do in the face of such odds?" The word and the attitude are as old and as new as the craven fear of a thoughtless majority.

"The congregation lifted up their voice and cried. The peo-

ple wept that night. The children of Israel murmured against Moses. They said, Would God we had died in the land of Egypt! Would God we had died in the wilderness!" They trembled and shriveled in the presence of the ten men who had outvoted the two until the very grasshoppers might have eaten them as dry leaves.

The anger of the Lord was kindled by this shameful exhibition of cowardly distrust. "How long will this people despise me? How long will they not believe in me for all the signs which I have wrought among them?" And this utterance of a profound disappointment was followed by a threat to smite them and disinherit them and raise up in their stead some worthy nation.

Here follows that wonderful intercession of Moses! It is the voice of a great-souled leader pleading for a people unworthy of his interest yet retained within his love. In the veins of his remonstrance the blood of a long-cherished affection runs red. He will not let them go until God shall bless them.

He bases his appeal upon a contention startling in its boldness. He insists that Yahweh's reputation is at stake. "The Egyptians will hear it and they will tell it unto the inhabitants of this land. If thou shalt kill this people, the report of thee will speak, saying, Because Yahweh was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness."

The phrasing is anthropomorphic in the extreme—to use that awkward, ponderous, theological term. If we should take the language literally and crudely, the situation would appear unseemly.

But the incongruity of it is only seeming—in the letter rather than in the spirit of the passage. In reality Moses was not standing between the Lord and the possible loss of his

reputation; he was not standing between the wrath of God and the fickle people. He was standing between the people and themselves—between their real selves as bound up with the interest and aid of the Almighty and that worst self which ever and anon came to the front in such an exhibition of flagrant distrust.

He was in reality staking his future and theirs upon his confidence in the divine integrity. "For thy name's sake," we say in reverent phrase—meaning that our ultimate trust in any great undertaking roots down at last into the ascertained and established reputation of the Eternal for compassion.

His prayer was heard. He felt the answer in his own heart though it was many a long day before the sluggish people could be brought to act with the two against the ten. Yet the two stood clearly within the slow-moving but irresistible will of the Eternal. "If God be for us, who can be against us." It has been the rallying cry of many a forlorn hope which held to its course in the face of whatever odds might oppose until it was seen at last to be no more forlorn, but crowned victorious.

How the outcome shakes our faith in the significance of hastily secured majorities! Ten to two—what of it? Count up the show of hands if you will, but strive to get beneath the surface and inquire more closely as to the content and quality of the hearts. Ask how far the action of the many or of the few is grounded in valid considerations, in a deeper knowledge of the really significant facts, in that faith and purpose which are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.

How greatly the significance of the "odd man" has been over-estimated! Multiply the odd man by ten as in the showing made in the varying reports of these scouts, and he is still but dust in the balance when viewed in the light of weightier considerations. The folly of such subservience to a majority

vote has been tersely set forth by the Dean of St. Paul's. "I cannot agree with Lord Morley that 'the poorest and most numerous class' is the people—it is simply 'the poorest and most numerous class.' And a political mob has no will; it has only passions and aspirations which are played upon by astute demagogues who have studied the psychology of crowds." If the Lord delights in the purposes we cherish and in the courses we take, he will give us the land even though the vote be ten to two against the project.

Chapter VIII

THE PERIL OF MORAL SHUFFLING

Numbers 22, 23

What a dramatic story is this history of Balaam! He was a prophet, a man who had the ear and the confidence of God, a man who "spoke for" God. He was a prophet with a reputation—kings from afar sent deputations to take counsel with him. He was a prophet whose word was with power—his blessings and his curses once uttered were regarded as irresistible. His weapons were not carnal, but they were mighty, according to the estimates of that day, in working good or ill.

Balak, king of Moab, knew all this. When the Israelites came fresh from their victory over the Amorites into the land of Moab, Balak sent for Balaam to curse the invaders. He felt that the incantations of this mighty prophet of the East would cast an evil spell over the Israelites and the Moabites would be able to drive them out. Balak therefore sent messengers with the rewards of divination in their hands to entreat Balaam to come and curse the Israelites.

But Balaam had a feeling that the Israelites were not a people to be cursed—we are told that he dimly recognized something of the significance they were to have for the moral life of the world. After taking counsel for a night with the deity he served, he refused to go with Balak's messengers. "Get you into your land," he said, "for the Lord refuseth to give me leave to go with you."

The messengers returned to the king with this disappointing answer. But Balak sent another deputation made up of princes

yet more honorable with promises of still greater reward if Balaam would only consent to come and curse the Israelites. Then Balaam instead of adhering to a right decision once made, began to parley with the messengers and with his conscience and with God. His word declining their offer sounds full and strong—he did protest too much. "If Balak would give me his houseful of silver and gold I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God to do less or more." But he did not adhere to that attitude so stoutly expressed—he invited the messengers to remain overnight and let him sleep on their proposition. He wanted to stay in the presence of temptation for another twenty-four hours and see what the outcome might be. He would take their offer for doing that which he knew to be wrong under advisement to see if by any twist he could bring the gaining of the reward within the rules of conscience.

At daybreak he had in some way compounded with his sense of right—he was ready to go. "Balaam rose up in the morning and saddled his ass and went with the princes of Moab." The double-minded man is unstable in all his ways—it is the easiest thing in the world for him to topple over into perdition when he forsakes the habit of standing erect.

On this journey of evil Balaam immediately began to encounter difficulties. The ass he rode, with the usual perversity of its kind, was unwilling to go toward the land of Moab—in hard-mouthed, stiff-necked fashion she turned aside into the field. When Balaam got the beast back into the road, she jammed his foot against a stone wall as if to lame him so that the journey should be impossible. When a third start was made, the ass laid down under Balaam and rolled him off.

The prophet's anger was kindled and he beat the ass with his staff. Then the Lord opened the mouth of the dumb beast and she spoke. We do not know what language the ass used. It may have been the language of signs. The dog who is fond

of his master can speak volumes to him with his eyes or even with his tail. This protest of the long-suffering animal who had borne Balaam for years and had never been wont to do so, made effective appeal to the heart of the man. He saw and heard that which opened his eyes. He saw "the angel of the Lord," the messenger of the Most High, standing in the way with a drawn sword. He rightly interpreted all these hindrances as obstacles divinely raised up to oppose him in his wrong course. He heard those hindrances say in audible tones, "We have come forth as an adversary because thy way is perverse."

Then Balaam, his eyes of moral insight opened at last, saw that he had been blind and wicked. He said to the angel of the Lord: "I have sinned. I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me. I will get me back again." If he had acted on this sober second thought which came to him in that moment of moral awakening, he would still have been secure in his honor. After further meditation, however, he resolved to go on, but with the determination that once there he would speak only the word that God should bid him speak. Alas, poor Balaam!

Three noted preachers of the Anglican Church have indicated in impressive fashion the subtle moral processes involved in the fall of this prophet of old. Bishop Butler has shown the self-deception which ever and anon persuades a good man that the sin he desires to commit may somehow be brought within the rules of conscience and revelation. John Henry Newman, with his literary skill and spiritual insight has portrayed the dark shadow cast over many an otherwise noble course by standing ever on the ladder of self-advancement. Thomas Arnold of Rugby has shown how there may exist the strange combination of the purest form of religious belief with a standard of action immeasurably below it. The student of

those subtle inner processes of mind and heart which issue in lines of action at once startling and tragic will be well repaid by an intimate study of this career of Balaam, the son of Beor.

How many there are who, encountering God's opposition to some wrong course, know not the day of their visitation! They may smite the opposition with a staff as Balaam smote the ass. They may show themselves blind and stubborn as mules. How many there are who, Balaam-wise, are striving to stretch their consciences until the sense of right may be made to encompass certain prohibited but much desired and profitable lines of evil! How many there are who, declining those first, fresh, right impulses which cause them to say, "I will not go," are led to think over the matter and sleep on the temptation until they finally yield, trudging off on the lower level!

When Balaam reached the land of Moab, he said to the king: "Build me here seven altars. Prepare me here seven bullocks and seven rams." The thing was done, for no pains were to be spared in securing an enchantment which would work havoc upon Israel. Then the king and the prophet performed the sacred rites of their religion together—"Balak and Balaam offered on every altar a bullock and a ram." The preliminary ritual properly observed, the prophet ascended with the king to a high place overlooking the camp of Israel to hurl against the people of God his wicked incantation.

But when he opened his mouth to pronounce his enchantment against the enemies of Moab, somehow the words of cursing would not come. "How can I curse whom God has not cursed? How can I defy whom God has not defied?" He could not bring himself to call down evil upon that people whom the Lord had chosen.

He saw something of the solitary moral grandeur which would make the Hebrews unlike any other nation. "This

people shall dwell alone and not be reckoned among the nations." He saw that their leader was a man of faith, possessed of a quality of life which was proof against the magic in which he dealt. "Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob nor is there any divination against Israel."

As he continued to look with prophetic eye upon the encampment of the people of God at the foot of the hill, he saw in them the promise of a still higher power of spiritual leadership yet to come. "I see him, but not now. I behold him, but not nigh. There shall arise a star out of Jacob and a scepter out of Israel." There would issue from that race of Israelites a type of spritual leadership still more exalted in which all the nations of the earth would be blessed. The longer Balaam looked upon them the fuller became the tones of blessing and of gracious hope which he uttered.

The king of Moab, who had paid Balaam to curse his enemies, naturally felt that he was being defrauded. "What hast thou done unto me? I took thee to curse mine enemies, and behold thou hast blessed them altogether." Balaam reminded the king of the insincere boast he had made at the outset—"If Balak would give me his houseful of silver and gold I could not go beyond the word of the Lord." Then Balak suggested this expedient. The prophet had been taking too large a view of the matter; he had been seeing too much of the significant possibilities of this people. "Come now," the king said, "to the place where thou shalt see but the utmost part of them, and not see them all, and curse me them from thence." If he could get the prophet behind the brow of the hill where he could see but the fag end of Israel encamped in the plain, it might be that the spell could be made to work. It was as Phillips Brooks said, "The common effort to secure a curse upon a half truth where the vision of the whole truth would make a blessing imperative."

How human it all is! Those old fellows in that far-away land wore sandals instead of shoes, flowing robes in place of trousers. They rode on camels and donkeys, knowing nothing of steam cars and automobiles. They were ancients and Orientals in outward form, but in every essential feature of their inner lives they were bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh.

Balaam juggling with his conscience, trying to get its consent to do wrong that he might obtain the rewards of evil; Balaam meeting with obstacles on his journey and referring them to some mysterious opposition from on high because his heart was wrong; Balaam trying to work his spell upon the people of God, but compelled in spite of himself to bless them —it is a dateless and eternal picture of vital moral processes.

Chapter IX

THE CALL OF A NEW LEADER

Deut. 31; Josh. 1

The man who was making his exit had given forty of the best years of his life to a certain undertaking. He had set out to bring his fellow Israelites from the slavery of Egypt into the freedom and opportunity of the land of promise. It was an arduous task, harder by far than he dreamed when he undertook it.

Here at the foot of Mt. Nebo he learns that he is to die with his splendid expectation unfulfilled. He had hoped to cross the Jordan at the head of that marching host. He had hoped to see that multitude of Israelites, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, entering into the enjoyment of that rich land which the Lord had given to their fathers. But it was not to be. The conviction was forced upon him as by a word of the Lord, "Thou shalt see it with thine eyes but thou shalt not go over thither."

Before he died he was led to the top of Mt. Nebo—that lofty elevation in the land of Moab where one can see the Jordan valley with its green fields and waving palm trees, the mountains round about Jerusalem and away to the north Ebal and Gerizim rising above the fertile valleys of Samaria. And when Moses scaled the mountainside to look out upon that splendid prospect, he heard the divine voice say, "Thou shalt not go over thither, but I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes."

It was no empty dream! It was no will-o'-the-wisp he had

been following these forty years! There was the land of Canaan stretching out before him in solid and enduring outlines! There was the goal at which he had been resolutely aiming. There was the great consummation which had hung like a brilliant constellation in his sky. There it was, and even though he might not enter in, he had brought the people so near that they would soon be able to possess the land. He died, the narrative says, "with his natural force unabated and his eye undimmed," because he had before his eyes that unattained yet alluring ideal.

The ideal yielded more than comfort for his last hours. The vision which had been before him during all those years of arduous service had been the secret of his enduring strength. His natural force was unabated by wearisome labor in the wilderness because he was a man of ideals. Moses did not live by bread alone nor by the hard facts of immediate experience alone, nor by the humdrum necessities of every-day existence alone—he lived by all those mysterious shapes and forms which were outlined against his sky when he kept sheep in the land of Midian.

It is the only way to live. The man who reads history knows what happened yesterday. The man who reads newspapers knows something of what is happening today. The man of vision because he sees the far-reaching purposes of him who is invisible knows what will happen tomorrow and the day after and the third day as the invincible will of the Most High marches toward the final consummation. We may rely upon this third man for strength which will not fail as he leads the multitudes of plodding, murmuring Israelites toward the land of promise.

But "after the death of Moses the Lord spake unto Joshua." The workers change—they come and go in shifts—the work goes on. Moses, and when he is gone, Joshua! David the

king, then for a later generation, Isaiah the prophet! John the beloved disciple of the inner life, then Paul the sturdy apostle of missionary activity loosing the gospel from its Hebraic swaddling clothes and setting it free for its career of world-wide influence! Luther the man of impulse and of generous action, then Calvin calmly and strongly building the principles of the Protestant faith into a system to feed a mighty race of men into fullness of strength! Jonathan Edwards preaching the wrath of God against evil until strong men trembled in their seats, then Henry Ward Beecher, Phillips Brooks and George Angier Gordon preaching the tender, compassionate, moral interest of an Infinite Father until the hard heart of the race would melt into a mood of penitence and aspiration!

Thus they come and thus they go! Each man the servant of an eternal purpose! Each man doing his particular bit of work and then falling back into the rest which remains for the people of God! And into each place thus left vacant, a new man called! "After the death of Moses, the Lord speaks to Joshua."

It is not only another man but a different type of man who is here brought upon the field. Moses was a man of peace, the meekest of his day. We never find him with a sword in his hand. He was busy with laws, ceremonies, institutions designed to educate an illiterate race in righteousness.

Moses saw the presence of God in a burning bush reverently putting the shoes from off his feet as upon holy ground. He saw the presence of God in a thunder storm at the top of Sinai and issued from that experience his face shining from the glory he had witnessed. He saw "the finger of God" in the writing of those laws which belong to the well-being of a nation. It was along these lines that Moses discerned the presence of God and became the efficient servant of his holy will.

But work of another sort was now to be undertaken and after the death of Moses the Lord spoke to Joshua. Jericho had to be captured. An idolatrous, licentious people was to be subdued. A footing for the Israelites had to be gained in the land given to their fathers. The conquered territory was to be divided up and assigned to the twelve tribes. Ability of another kind was in demand. The call was for soldierly courage and administrative capacity.

When Joshua, the new leader, had his vision of the divine it came in these terms: He was standing outside the walls of Jericho when "behold there stood over against him a man with a drawn sword in his hand" proclaiming himself as "The Captain of the Host of the Lord." And this place where Joshua stood face to face with the military necessities of the situation and with the offer of divine re-enforcement in the hard fight ahead was to him holy ground. He put the shoes from off his feet. It was another vision of the same God in terms appropriate to another form of service.

The story gives us a picture of the constant changes which are taking place in that vast work which the Lord of all the higher values is steadily carrying forward. Many a man and many a method does its appointed task and passes away—the Lord has called a different type of man and another sort of method into the field. And these rapid changes bring not dismay but inspiration to the children of the Kingdom. They indicate that we serve "the living God."

The startling symbolism of a familiar item in the military funeral is here suggested. "With slow and reverent step, with dirge and muffled drum the procession approaches the place of burial. As the last service to a comrade is performed the salute is fired and 'taps' are blown. The sweet, sad tones of the soldiers' 'good-night' sound out and the line of march is formed in heaviness of spirit. But no sooner is the column

outside the cemetery gates and once more upon the highway than a quickstep is struck up by the band and the ranks move off alert and erect at the regulation tread. The change is so sudden as to seem brutal and unfeeling."

But it is not so, it is rather an open testimony to the call of duty which sounds forth from any vacant place in the ranks. The death of one brave man summons the brave men still living to further courageous action. "Moses my servant is dead—now therefore arise and go over this Jordan!" The very words of summons sound a quickstep which will carry the hesitant Israelites into the heart of the land of promise.

There is to be a steady continuance of the divine help. "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee." The divine help given to the man of vision at the mountain top, to the prophet of the Lord writing upon the hearts of the people the law of heaven, is to be vouchsafed in equal measure to the soldierly Joshua engaged in the rougher task of subduing kingdoms, wielding the edge of the sword, waxing valiant in fight and turning to flight the armies of aliens.

The old distinction between the sacred and the secular has largely faded out of the modern consciousness, leaving only a deeper, surer sense of things right and things wrong. The great right things are all sacred in whatever field they are found. And the wrong things are just wrong with no redeeming feature in them. The presence and the help of God may be enjoyed as steadily and as richly in those secular undertakings which have to do with the advancement of righteousness and peace upon the earth as in those lines of effort sometimes esteemed more sacred because they are associated with ecclesiastical forms.

Let every soul hear this word of the Lord—"As I was with thee in the place of worship and in the mood of prayer so I will be with thee on the plane of commercial or civic action

when thou shalt stand without flinching for those principles which are right!" Let any man be intent upon doing the will of God and wherever that high purpose carries him he will hear a voice from the Unseen—"I will not fail thee nor forsake thee."

It may be that the humanitarian drift in our generation, coupled with an over-emphasis upon the tender and compassionate aspects of the character of the Master, has obscured those simple, direct, soldierly virtues which stand out clear-cut and virile in military life. The manifest value of discipline, the worthy habit of unhesitating obedience to one's superior, the acceptance of hardship and danger as belonging to the ordinary day's work, the readiness upon occasion to go forth jauntily upon a forlorn hope, the pledged intent to face death for the sake of the cause at stake, all these moral qualities have high value for the progress of that Kingdom whose prince is "The Prince of Peace." They cannot be omitted from any life without irreparable loss.

It is significant that the One who came to make peace bore in its Greek form the name of the greatest soldier in the history of his own nation. The name "Jesus" is but the later form of the name "Joshua," the captain of the Lord's host who fought his good fight and kept the faith that he might establish his people in the land which the Lord had sworn unto their fathers to give them.

Chapter X

THE CROSSING OF THE JORDAN

Joshua 3

It was a great hour in the history of Israel. The passing of the Jordan was not the mere putting behind them of a narrow, muddy stream—it marked the emergence of a people from the nomadic life of the desert into the beginnings of the settled life of Canaan. It marked the passing of their fitful distrust in God's promises into a firmer acceptance of his assurance that to the seed of Abraham he would give this land for an inheritance.

When they reached the bank of the river three days were spent in waiting for the opportune moment and in solemn preparation. On the evening of the third day Joshua summoned them to a final consecration service. "Sanctify yourselves," he said, "for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you." The eve of any signal display of the divine mercy is a time for every human faculty involved to rise into a new sense of its sacred significance.

The order of march, as the line formed, was a moving picture of spiritual truth. What an approach the marching host of Israelites made toward the fulfillment of their long-cherished hopes! The advance guard was not formed from bands of sharpshooters—it was made up of white-robed priests. The right of the line was given to the accredited representatives of divine guidance. The officer of the day "spake unto the priests, saying, Take up the ark of the covenant and pass over before the people."

This band of immigrants from afar, about to set foot upon the soil of their future home, may have left many things behind them on the east bank of the river. We can see them casting aside the ragged clothing, the well-worn shoes, the useless camp rubbish. But "the ark of the covenant" was there in its place of honor at the head of the marching host. They had been led in all their wanderings by this sacred chest containing the two tables of the law, the rod of Aaron and the pot of manna—fit symbols of the rule, the guidance and the sustaining providence of Jehovah. Now, as they essayed an entrance into this strange land ahead, moving in untried paths and whispering to one another, "We have not passed this way heretofore," they still placed their reliance upon the unseen realities symbolized by the sacred contents of the ark.

When any boundary in an unfolding experience is to be passed, the question as to what is to be taken and what is to be left becomes a vital question. The young man emerging from college into the busy life of that world which is larger and more exacting than the campus; the young man and maiden coming out from two homes to blend their life currents in the establishment of a third home; the man in mature life turning some sharp corner by an abrupt change in the outward circumstances of his life; the growing, thinking, discriminating mind emerging from a narrow into a broader and more vital form of belief—in every such hour the thoughtful will say, "We have not passed this way heretofore—what shall we take and what shall we leave?" However radical the change in the outward setting and opportunity of the life, we may be sure that it is well for the children of every race to carry with them the same abiding moral principles, the same intimate sense of the divine guidance and care which have revealed their abiding worth in the earlier wanderings.

When a man marshals all the faculties of his life behind the

ark of God that they may take their direction and gain their confidence from that august source, his career will be indeed an advance into the heart of the land of promise. "It is God and the discovery of him in life and the certainty that he has plans for our lives and is doing something with them, that gives us a true, deep sense of movement, and lets us always feel the power and delight of unknown coming things."

The people were *led* by the ark across the Jordan, not driven by compulsion from behind. They entered the land of promise, each man walking with willing steps on his own two feet. The divine approach is made ever in terms of opportunity. "Behold I have set before thee an open door." The soul is never dragged through nor forced in by coercion—the entrance is made by definite choice and voluntary action as the finite will accepts for itself the guidance and the governance of an Infinite Good Will.

The flood of divine energy and purpose never sweeps the earth so completely but that there is "an ark of safety," as Martineau said, where rides "the liberty of human choice and personal will." "Sink that, and the world would be one vast Dead Sea occupied by God alone." The very grace of God is resistible—"I stand at the door and knock; if any man will open the door, I will come in"—it never overpowers nor compels. The priests carried the ark at the head of the marching host—it was Jehovah's invitation for them to follow his lead that they might enter the land of promise.

There was "a space" between the people and the ark of "about two thousand cubits by measure." The interval between the priests and the marching congregation was more than half a mile. The long remove would better enable the great multitude to follow the movements of the ark as the visible symbol of a divine leadership. The interval suggests that the movements of any divine purpose in history can best

be discerned and interpreted when viewed from some distance where the eye sweeps broader fields of human experience.

The method by which the crossing of the river was effected is not described in detail. There are seasons of the year when the Jordan is fordable not far from the site of Jericho. We are told that the spies had crossed and recrossed without any miraculous intervention on their behalf. The writer says that "the waters which came down from above stood and rose up in one heap a great way off at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan." (R. V.)

The Jordan flows from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea much of the way at the bottom of a ravine. The place named "Zarethan" was opposite Mt. Gilboa, some forty miles above the site of Jericho. A heavy landslide from the side of the ravine would have dammed the waters at that point, causing them to rise "in a heap"; and by the cutting off of the flow making the channel for many miles below the dam sufficiently shallow for the Israelites to cross. It may well be that some such occurrence underlies the dramatic story which the writer has given us, indicating his faith that Israel had been providentially aided in making its entrance into the land of promise.

The author's faith in the power of the touch of the consecrated life upon the forces of nature is indicated in striking fashion. "It shall come to pass when the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the Lord . . . shall rest in the waters of Jordan, the waters of Jordan shall be cut off." In the long run, the moral purpose of each life produces a reaction from the natural order which enfolds us, favorable or unfavorable, according to its own inner quality. The disobedient man in the garden of the Lord finds the very elements opposing him in his wrong-doing—"Cursed is the ground for thy sake—thorns and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee." The man faithful and obedient hearkening diligently to the voice

of the Lord realizes the promise, "Blessed shalt thou be in the city and blessed shalt thou be in the field."

The widening, deepening experience of the race warrants us in cherishing the faith that the whole system of things material and things spiritual is in solemn league and covenant with the Maker of heaven and earth for the promotion of righteousness. We may well believe that the natural order had a response to make to Christ upon the approach of his holy personality which it does not make to sinful men. The constant value of this consecrated touch upon the forces of the outer world is suggested in the statement that when the feet of the priests rested in the waters of Jordan the waters were cut off from above to give safe passage to those who followed this sacred leadership.

The faith and the fidelity of the priests in that high hour brought fresh courage to the heart of Joshua. They made the first approach to the river in unwavering trust that the promise of God would not fail. They advanced into the bed of the stream and stood at the place of greatest peril until all the congregation of men, women and children was safe on the opposite shore—"the priests that bare the ark stood firm in the midst of Jordan until all the nation were passed clean over Jordan." Their significant action would strengthen their hold upon the hearts of the people. The moral appeal of any religious leader gathers its main strength from the power of his own consistent example. Let the minister who would gain power to lead his people into devoted service stand himself in the river bed of obedient trust. The spiritual leadership which draws after it the wills of men, as the moon draws the waters of the ocean in mighty tides, is purchased ever with this great price—it comes only through the pouring out of the life currents in obedient self-sacrifice.

This striking scene was appropriately commemorated. The

people lodged in stone an enduring remembrance of the signal mercies of God revealed on that great day. Twelve men, one from each tribe, took up as many stones from the bed of the river and bore them to their first halting place in Canaan that there the leader of the expedition might build an altar of witness and remembrance. The simple monument built of stones brought from the bed of the stream would serve for future generations as a mute but eloquent witness of the mercy of God in bringing his children safely into the land of promise as by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.

The visible mementoes of sacred experiences, the outward symbols of august relationships, have abiding worth. The plain gold band marking the plighting of a troth, the bit of parchment marking the consummation of years of study, the terra-cotta button of the Grand Army, the Victoria Cross of the English service, all point to values and sanctities unseen and eternal.

Chapter XI

THE FALL OF JERICHO

Joshua 5, 6

The book of Joshua was written by a man whose imagination was on fire. His words are not always the careful, accurate words which belong to the prosaic recital of dull facts. His words are the words which glow and burn in the mind of the poet. In his treatment of them he has idealized the situations he describes.

The conquest of Canaan was not carried swiftly forward to its completion by a succession of striking victories. The inhabitants were not exterminated and the various territories allotted to and occupied by the various tribes before the death of Joshua as some portions of this book might indicate. There are bits here and there in the second half of the book which indicate that the conquest of the land was gradual and partial. This is the view which finds corroboration in the historical references of the more reliable book of Judges. But working in the poet's mood the author has given us in this story of the fall of Jericho a magnificent and dramatic presentation of certain splendid spiritual truths.

"The children of Israel did eat of the produce (R. V.) of the land in the plains of Jericho and the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the produce of the land." The trains of the divine purpose made exact connection—there was no hitch nor break. It was enough—we are only bidden to pray that the Lord who gives us our meat in due season should "give us this day" bread sufficient for this day's need.

When Joshua stood before the walls of Jericho meditating

upon its conquest, he had his vision of the divine. It did not come as the manifestation of an awful and unapproachable glory such as Moses beheld when he stood at the top of the mount, face to face with those verities which he was to record on tables of stone. Joshua saw the approach of divine help in terms of his own particular interest and need. He saw the presence of the Great Ally as if he had been an armed figure with a drawn sword in his hand. He saw the offer of help from on high manifesting itself in that form best suited to the hard task at hand. "As Captain of the Host of the Lord, am I now come," the Presence said, and Joshua put off his shoes and fell upon his face.

"Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel—none went out and none came in." The place was bottled up tight by the fear arising from the presence of the multitude of strange men who moved across the Jordan and now encompassed the city, bearing at the head of the marching host the symbols of their religion. There was an untabulated divine element in their approach which brought consternation to the wicked hearts of those men of Jericho.

The morals of the place were such as to make the report of them "not fit to print." The life of the city was foul, corrupt, decadent. The inhabitants had received in the natural beauty of the region and in the fertility of the valley five talents of opportunity, but they had hidden them away in the cerements of rottenness and decay. Now the hour had struck for a divine judgment. They were confronted by men who had caught a vision of the sacredness of life and purity—the principles of righteousness were graven on tables of stone in that ark of the covenant which they bore at the head of the line as a pillar of cloud and fire for their daily guidance.

The sinner is a coward. He is afraid of his own conscience. He is afraid of the tongues of men. He is afraid of the justice

of God. He flees when no man pursues. When the messengers of deserved retribution are after him he becomes panic-stricken and flees the faster. In our whole study of this narrative we are to have regard to the psychology of those who stand upon the field of action.

The men of Israel were not instructed to make their attack as if they had been so many Goliaths with swords and spears, each like a weaver's beam. They were to go in the name of the Lord of Hosts whom the men of Jericho had defied. They were to march around the city, led by their priests bearing the ark of the covenant and blowing upon rams' horns, once each day for seven days.

This action seemed strange to the men upon the walls, but the very mystery of it struck terror to their hearts. In that moving host, as it seemed, some awful judgment was coiling itself like a serpent around the vitals of the place. And the coil was tightened and strengthened on the last day when in a sevenfold strand it wrapped itself about them, making escape impossible.

It was done in grave and reverent silence. "Ye shall not shout nor let your voice be heard, neither shall any word proceed out of your mouth until the day I bid you shout." Joshua would give the symbolism of this impressive, instructive spectacle its full chance to make a profound impression upon the imagination of friend and foe.

The massing of the forces of righteousness in martial array upon occasion has its place. The impressive sight of thousands of young people in some monster Christian Endeavor Convention has a voice and a language of its own—its message goes out throughout the earth, and its inspiration to the end of the world. After the Christian Endeavor Convention in San Francisco in 1897 I heard for years from the lips of rough stage drivers swinging their six-horse teams over the mountain

passes in the high Sierra, tributes to the fairness, the kindness, the courtesy of that army of twenty-five thousand young people who had invaded the Golden State, making it for the time their own. "Them Endeavorers who rode with me in '97," one of them said to me, "was awful nice people."

What an effect it would have if the hidden forces of righteousness in any nation could be summoned to a great parade, six hundred thousand here and six hundred thousand there, bearing aloft the symbols of their faith, passing in review, day after day, for seven days! The coils of judgment would tighten on many of the forces of evil. The walls of wickedness in many an evil stronghold would fall down flat at the very sight. The author of this striking narrative understood well the psychology which underlies the movements of multitudes.

When on the seventh day the climax came in this mobilization of the Lord's Host, the people shouted with a great shout as if splendidly conscious of the coming triumph. And the defenses of the city collapsed. The place was unable to defend itself. "The walls fell down flat so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city."

There stands the picture! I am not eager to inquire closely into what prosaic fact may underlie that vivid treatment of the event. There are thoughtful men who see in it a gigantic miracle. There are those who, recalling the proximity of Jericho to Sodom and Gomorrah (which were overthrown by some awful cataclysm in that low-lying valley with its slime pits and wells of bitumen indicative of terrible geological changes in the past), believe that the destruction of the walls of Jericho by some such upheaval in the earth's crust is here dealt with in vivid homiletic form. There are those who see in this whole narrative the hand and mind of the poet.

Let every man be as fully persuaded in his own mind as the evidence warrants! In any event, the passage tells us that many of the greatest victories are won, not by the fierce and sudden thrust of human energy, but by quiet, persistent, trustful obedience to the will of God.

The spoil of the place was "tabu," that is, "forbidden." "Keep yourselves from the devoted thing lest ye should make the camp of Israel accursed—all the silver and gold and vessels of brass are holy unto the Lord." He would thus prevent the mingling of motives lest the desire for plunder should stain the even virtue of their moral enterprise.

The city was to be ruthlessly exterminated. It was a stern time and the plea of "military necessity" if ever justifiable may well be pleaded here. To leave this wicked city undestroyed would have been to leave a perpetual source of "fire from the rear." If the Hebrews were to occupy the land given unto their fathers in the interests of a nobler method of life and the fulfillment of a spiritual purpose, the ground had to be cleared. The men of Jericho were fruitless branches on the tree of life, to be cut off and cast into the fire that the tree might bear worthier fruit. It was the humane Christ himself who suggested the necessity for moral surgery.

The woman of immoral trade called Rahab was to be spared, she and her house. It was only a cup of cold water which she had given in the spirit of a disciple of better things, yet in that crucial hour of judgment her deed of mercy did not fail of its reward.

"The Lord hath given you the city," Joshua had said. Yet there it stood, its walls still "reaching up to heaven," as the report of the ten cowardly spies had it, and the men behind those walls so mighty as to cause their foes to seem as grasshoppers. It was the announcement of an unfulfilled ideal which lay secure within the divine purpose. When these men

of faith, following the ark of the covenant, moved out in quiet, persistent obedience to an impulse divinely implanted, when they did it again and again and again, even seven times and then seven times more, the ideal was realized. "They took the city."

Chapter XII

THE SIN OF GRAFT

Joshua 7

"The love of money" has been "a root of all evil" ever since there was money to love and men to love it. When the devil invented greed, if the devil invents sins to thwart the divine purpose, he made a master stroke. There are natures innumerable which stand bomb-proof against the coarse sins of the flesh, but find themselves pierced to the heart by the subtle, insidious approach of the spirit of avarice. Greater is he that ruleth the love of gain in his own heart than he that taketh a city.

"The children of Israel committed a trespass," we read. When the Lord made his promise to deliver Jericho into their hands, he stipulated that "all the silver and gold, all the vessels of brass and of iron" should be "tabu." They were to be placed in the treasury of the Lord and not appropriated by personal avarice lest the desire for plunder should blind the eyes of those immature Israelites to the moral significance of devoting the hateful city of Jericho to destruction.

The command of the Lord seems to have been generally obeyed. But the sight of so much "easy money," shekels of silver, wedges of gold and handsome Babylonish mantles was too much for the itching palms of one Hebrew family. There it all was within arm's length—a little of it would not be missed from the divine treasury. And the appropriation of it would put this family, somewhat needy after the long sojourn in the wilderness, on "Easy Street" for the rest of their days. We

can almost hear them reasoning their way into an act of disobedience which promised such handsome dividends. So this family of Achan took what gold and silver and raiment they could lay their hands on and hid the plunder in a hole in the ground under Achan's tent. "We shall be that much better off," they said. "None of the men of Jericho will be any the poorer, for they are doomed to slaughter. Our fellow-Israelites will be none the wiser. And as for the Lord, the cattle on a thousand hills are his—how should he need this slice we have taken?"

How common and how ugly is this spirit in that race which has done so much for the moral advancement of the world by its poets and prophets, its seers and its singers, and above all by the Man of Nazareth born in Bethlehem, bone of its bone and flesh of its flesh! Here was Saul grasping the best of the sheep and the oxen and the fatlings which he had been ordered to slay in his stern war against Agag—the chance to turn an extra penny in the transaction was too much for him! Here was Gehazi (feeling that his Master Elisha had been altogether too generous in healing Naaman's leprosy out of hand with never a penny to pay) hastening after the grateful man to levy upon him a bit of graft—"a talent of silver and two changes of garments!" Here was Judas dickering in the dark with the enemies of his Lord and by his act of treachery finding himself thirty pieces of silver to the good! Here was Ananias, proud of his position in that Christian community, now moving upon a high level in the administration of its economic affairs yet keeping back for his personal profit a part of the price of his piece of land with a lie upon his lips!

"The love of money is the root of all evil"—the statement has been written out by Hebrew hands a thousand times in letters that burn. The Lord of the higher values has had to wrestle with that thrifty race until the breaking of the day,

again and again, to prevent the spirit of avarice from defeating the purpose of their high election to moral and spiritual leadership in the redemption of the world.

After the sin of Achan had been committed the Israelites went to battle against Ai and they were defeated. It brought consternation to Joshua their leader and to all the people who had been greatly emboldened by their success at Jericho. They tried to interpret the meaning of this strange occurrence. The sense of having done wrong would account for the cowardly action of the members of Achan's family who were privy to the steal. When men have done wrong, the ensuing fear is quite in line with the best we know in psychology and quite in line with the oft-repeated injunction: "I will send a faintness into their hearts in the land of their enemies. The sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them and they shall flee as fleeing from a sword and fall when none pursueth." "Be sure your sin will find you out"—if not in open disgrace then in that reduced efficiency and depleted spirit which may spell defeat for you in some important crisis when all that you hold dear is at stake.

When defeat came to his army, "Joshua rent his clothes and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the Lord." He sobbed out his discouragement. "Alas, O Lord God! What shall I say when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies? The inhabitants of the land shall hear of it and cut off our name from the earth! And what wilt thou do unto thy great name?"

Then came sharp and quick, like military orders from some superior officer, those stern words of the Lord. "Get thee up! Wherefore liest thou on thy face? Israel hath sinned! They have transgressed my covenant! They have taken of the accursed thing! They have stolen and dissembled!"

It was no time for sobbing; it was no time for lying on one's

face before the ark of the covenant and reproaching the Lord. It was a time to hew to the line with an ax laid at the root of the matter and then to put away evil out of their lives. The sin was announced and the search was ordered which resulted in bringing the greedy, sacrilegious thieves to the bar of justice.

When the offender is summoned Joshua deals with him as some stern but honest-hearted confessor might deal with a criminal on the gallows. "My son, I pray thee, give glory to the Lord God of Israel and make confession unto him! Tell me now what thou hast done. Hide it not." When confession was made Joshua sent messengers and found the plunder hidden in the hole in the ground, as Achan had said.

The penalty visited upon the offense seems cruelly severe. They took the guilty man and the plunder, together with "his sons and his daughters, his asses and his sheep and his tent and all that he had and brought them into the valley of Achor" —which means "Troubling," for he had troubled Israel. There they stoned them to death and burned them with fire, in order, they said, that "the Lord might be turned from the fierceness of his anger."

It was a rough, wild time, not to be judged by our standards. The more deliberate and orderly processes of law which we know, the more humane methods of dealing with offenders which the coming of the Gospel made imperative lay far ahead in a remote future. These fierce men "wrought righteousness," not in ideal fashion, but as they could. They worked according to the imperfect methods of that primitive time. In their desire to avert the disfavor of their deity by not infringing upon his rights in claiming the spoil of that city for a special purpose and in opposing themselves to that spirit of avarice which was a foe to be feared, we can understand how their ways were blunt and the weapons of their warfare cruel.

When this summary penalty had been visited upon the offending Achan, Joshua ordered another attack upon Ai. This second battle issued in a splendid victory. We are not to credit the later success entirely to the fact that they had put away the unclean thing. When the first attack was made the attacking party was not large. The scouts did not deem it necessary that Israel should move in force. "Let not all the people go up! Let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai! So there went up about *three thousand men* and they fled before the men of Ai," as we have seen.

When the second attack was made a much larger force was sent. "Joshua arose and all the people of war to go up to Ai. And Joshua chose *thirty thousand men,* the mighty men of valor, and sent them forth by night." This expedition resulted in a sweeping victory. While we do not minimize the moral effect of searching out and punishing the act of disobedience on the part of Achan, the presence of an army of thirty thou sand men in place of the former three thousand before Ai undoubtedly helped to change defeat into victory.

The lesson is old and new, local and universal. The desire to personally appropriate out of some great common store that to which one is not rightly entitled is an insidious desire. When a battle is fought human vultures appear upon the scene to rob the dead. In recent railroad wrecks there have been rascals on hand to steal the purses and watches of the injured victims. When a great fire occurs in a city the pistols of the police are needed to prevent the looting of the threatened stores. When the relief funds so generously provided by the people of the country were being administered to the sufferers from the San Francisco earthquake, the members of the executive committee required the service of trained charity workers to protect that fund from unworthy claimants.

And in situations less dramatic than the battle of Ai or the

California earthquake, the swearing off of taxes, the incomplete return to the assessor, the readiness to profit by an unjust claim upon a public corporation, the quiet grafting practiced by people who are supposed to be respectable, all testify to the same moral weakness which brought the family of Achan to the valley of Achor. With less awful but no less searching methods it is for our own land to deal fearlessly with that same sin of avarice which eats away the heart of honesty and defeats the cause of righteousness.

Chapter XIII

THE DIVISION OF THE LAND

Joshua 14

"These are the inheritances which the children of Israel took in the land of Canaan." Then follows the assignment to the various tribes with the laying out of the conquered territory in metes and bounds.

This book of Joshua is a geography in itself. When one makes a tour of the Holy Land the two best books for daily reference are "Baedeker's Palestine" and the book of Joshua, even as "The Historical Geography of the Holy Land," by George Adam Smith, is the best volume to interpret and correlate one's impressions.

The assignment of territory to the various tribes was made, for the most part, "by lot." In such a grave matter as the title to land it would seem to us a strange proceeding to "toss up for it." It was a way they had. It would be passing strange if we should undertake to choose a man for spiritual leadership by drawing names from a hat, yet that is exactly what the eleven disciples did after the defection of Judas. Two names were proposed for the vacant place, "Joseph called Barnabas" and "Matthias." And the faithful eleven prayed—"Thou Lord who knowest the hearts of all men, shew of these two the one whom thou hast chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship. . . . And they gave lots for them and the lot fell upon Matthias: and he was numbered with the eleven apostles."

The Orientals believe that by this process of chance they

eliminate all human judgment and personal will, thereby leaving the matter entirely to the determination of the Unseen One. This strange custom still persists in that region—when the road forks and Moslem travelers are uncertain whether to take to the right or to the left, they sometimes close a fruitless discussion of the probabilities by saying, "Let us leave it to Allah." Then they cast lots and serenely follow the lead of chance.

Thus the twelve victorious tribes in the allotment of the land of Canaan felt that the divine will was being more nearly consulted "by the lot" than would have been the case had the matter been determined by the exercise of personal judgment on the part of wise and godly men.

The larger part of the chapter is taken from the address of Caleb. This brave, modest, cheerful man, simple and rugged like Adam Bede, holds the center of the stage through a large part of this book of Joshua. He was a man who had the courage to speak out in direct, childlike fashion exactly what he thought. "Forty years old I was when Moses sent me to spy out the land and I brought him word again *as it was in my heart.*" He was the real thing, with no taint of pretense or make-believe.

He looks back to that hour on the other side of the river where the vote was two to ten when a division was called for. It seemed as if the government which had been in power would be counted out in the face of such a majority against it. "My brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt, but I wholly followed the Lord my God." The fact that he did "wholly follow" was the final secret of his strength and of his potent influence for good. Joshua, Caleb and Jehovah, the three of them, furnished a working minority which proved effective against the combination of the ten distrustful spies

and the fickle populace standing ready to accept the advice of the cowards as against the counsel of heroic, believing men.

"I wholly followed the Lord my God." Here we have the sufficing account of many a life, mighty in its power for good. This is what Livingstone said when Stanley found him in the heart of the African jungle and would have brought him back to the safety and comforts of civilization. Livingstone regarded himself as "the candle of the Lord," burning in the dark of Africa's moral need, and he would burn to the socket! This is what Horace Pitkin of Yale said when he gave his life fearlessly for the redemption of China at the time of the Boxer outbreak. He too "wholly followed" and the seed sown by that valiant company of missionaries to which he belonged is today producing a rich harvest in the movement of China toward a new era in her long and solemn history.

The Lord had carried his covenant, never for one moment unmindful of his own, across the wide stretch of intervening years which lay between this high hour and the giving of a certain assurance to Caleb when he was leading the fight in "the battle of the wilderness." The Lord had said: "Surely the land shall be an inheritance to thee and to thy children forever because thou hast wholly followed the Lord thy God. And now behold the Lord hath kept me alive these five and forty years from the time that the Lord spake this word unto Moses while Israel walked in the wilderness."

He had waited patiently with unfaltering confidence for well-nigh half a century, assured that the Almighty never forgets. He had learned to "walk and not faint" in the common round and round, which is the very climax of the promise made of old to strength divinely renewed. Here at the conquest of the land and in the allotment of territory his hopes are fulfilled. He was now an old man of eighty-five, and as his

eye ranges back over that wide field of personal experience he could say with a note of triumph. "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether: and in keeping of them there is great reward."

This great-souled man is ready for further heroic effort. "I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me—now, therefore, give me this mountain." It was a demand for the arduous task. The "mountain" was a place of difficulty, for the Israelites were to become farmers, fruit-raisers and stock-growers. It is not easy to farm on a mountainside where the doubletree is at an angle of thirty degrees in doing the spring plowing. It is no easy task to grow crops where in a night a dashing rain may wash crop and soil into the valley below. When a man builds his house on a mountainside the front door may be twenty feet in the air while the back door is underground. In many parts of Palestine the mountain had to be terraced for building or for the planting of vines and olive trees. All this Caleb knew well, for he was a practical, experienced man, yet in the face of everything he said boldly, "Give me this mountain."

The mountain spelled struggle of another type. It was the hill country which best withstood attack and longest remained unconquered. "The sons of Anak" (the giants who made the ten timid spies feel like grasshoppers) "were there." If Caleb settled on that mountain he would have to fight those sturdy enemies of the divine purpose before he could turn a furrow or plant a tree. The struggle would be fierce, for the Anakim would fortify the mountainside and strive to hold it against all comers. But this energetic old man was undaunted—"I shall drive them out," he cried, "as the Lord spake."

The men who thus accept the challenge of hardship are the only men who are worth while. What a soft, pulpy, characterless lot of weaklings is turned out where the whole voyage is

made under clear skies and on quiet seas! Sailors are made by sailing the high seas in all weathers, not by paddling well-cushioned canoes around some glassy millpond.

The cleanest, soundest body of monks to be found anywhere is in the "Hospice of the Great St. Bernard." They live the year round at an elevation of eight thousand feet. The ground is frequently covered with snow in July. It is no fancy piece of hardship they have chosen for themselves, as growing boys sometimes elect to sleep in a cave for the novelty and excitement of it—they are needed. The peasants returning late in the season from Southern France (where they have worked through the summer) to their homes in Italy are caught in the drifts and whirling snow. The monks with their big, bluff dogs are needed to rescue the poor fellows overtaken by the storms of the Alps.

The severity of this life at that high level, physical and moral, does not attract the lazy, the selfish, the sensual. The automatic principle of natural selection operates here as elsewhere. And the life itself, with its ventures and its rigors, by its rough contact with the clean snow and with the big, honest dogs, still further develops the best there is in those men. Inevitably, therefore, they stand high in Christian manliness. "Give us this mountain," was their word of aspiration when they made their choice, and the hard place has been the making of them.

What gave us Oliver Cromwell and Abraham Lincoln, David Livingstone and Henry M. Stanley, General Booth and Jerry McAuley? Civil wars, dark continents, city slums—hard places every one of them! Mountains to be mastered by men with hearts like that of Caleb! The strong man of old was found on the mountainside where the giants of difficulty confronted him, and all strong men march in the same brigade.

When so many men and women are seeking to gain affluence

that in the ripened maturity of their powers they may retire from the industrial, the civic and the religious struggles which are on, that they may travel or live at ease, it is stimulating to hear these words of faith and courage fall from the lips of this undaunted warrior for righteousness. "I am eighty-five," he says, "but I am as strong as I was in the day that Moses sent me to spy out the land." Here at an age long past the time when many less resolute souls have begun to wait for the halo—which, alas! may never come to them in that passive mood—he is calling for a fresh mountain of difficulty to be overcome in the name of the Lord.

Chapter XIV

THE ROUGH TOOLS OF THE LORD

Judges 2, 4, 5

We enter here upon the Book of Judges. "Other portions of scripture may be more profitable for correction, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness, but for merely human interest, for the lively touches of ancient manners, for the succession of romantic incidents, for the tragic pathos of events and characters, there is nothing like the history of the Judges," says Dean Stanley. "It would seem as if this book had been left in the Bible to enforce upon us the necessity of recognizing the human, national, even barbarian element which plays its part in sacred history."

"The children of Israel did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord"—and the usual result followed; they went down to defeat before their enemies. Then the Lord raised up "Deborah, a prophetess"—the word being used in its older sense as of one on whom the spirit of Yahweh had come. He raised up Deborah, a woman of great personal force, and Barak, a somewhat feeble lieutenant. The firm name always read, "Deborah & Barak," for the woman was the leading member. "She judged Israel at that time."

She summoned Barak and outlined her plan for a battle between the Israelites and the Canaanites on the slopes of Mount Tabor. "And Barak said to her, If thou wilt go with me, I will go." He felt that her presence as one on whom the spirit of Yahweh had come would insure the sense of divine re-enforcement as well as inspire the troops with added confidence.

Ten thousand Israelites were lined up under this commanding leadership against Sisera, with "all his chariots, even nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people that were with him." The battle was fought out "and the Lord discomfited Sisera and all his chariots and all his host with the edge of the sword before Barak."

But the truth is brought out both in the narrative and in the triumphal ode which follows it that their own right arms had not gotten them the victory—it was indeed "the Lord who had discomfited Sisera and his host." It was fitting that the people should be summoned in the stirring language of this ancient poem to sing praises to their God for "the stars in their courses fought against Sisera."

The plain, prose facts underlying these glowing statements were these: Just as the battle opened there came a fierce storm, converting the heavy soil of the battlefield into a perfect morass. "The heavens dripped, yea, the clouds dropped water and the mountains flowed down at the presence of the Lord." The huge war horses and the heavy chariots of iron which the enemy had brought into the field were unable to charge. The poem pictures them as floundering helpless in the deep mud.

Then the cold rain turned into sleet and the sleet, driven by a fierce wind into the faces of the advancing Canaanites, made ineffective their use of sling and spear. The Israelites, on the other hand, with the storm at their backs and their courage heightened by the feeling that they were receiving providential aid from the God they served, fought splendidly and successfully. They slaughtered the helpless men who were vainly trying to use their chariots of iron; they put to flight the foot soldiers who could not defend themselves with the storm beating in their faces; and thus they won a notable victory over their foes. The stars in their courses fought against Sisera.

The Israelites, in reckoning up the forces which entered into the result, saw this. The wind and the rain, the hail and the sleet, coming opportunely out of the skies by no act of theirs, had lined up with them as effective allies. And when these pious men ran their eyes over the complete muster roll, the forces from above combining with their own determined valor, they knew that Sisera had been foredoomed to defeat because he was fighting the stars.

Here is a bold, poetic statement of a splendid moral truth! In the long run the forces of earth and sky alike are hostile to the low type of life represented by Sisera. Cruelty, oppression, inhumanity are doomed to defeat. When nations or individuals cultivate those qualities they are fighting the stars—and the stars will be too much for them. As it was with Sisera, so it is now with all men and ever shall be, world without end.

The forces of evil are sometimes victorious in a skirmish. Now and then they win a battle, but the war goes always against them. When the end comes and the articles of capitulation are signed, the forces of evil are found biting the dust. There are all manner of forces, human and divine, seen and unseen, perpetually at war with wrong-doing. The combination of all these mighty energies makes the outcome sure. The man who in any wise undertakes to live a wrong life is fighting a losing battle with the stars.

The narrative of the victory won in the field is followed by the story of Jael's treacherous deed in slaying the fleeing general of the defeated army. "Sisera lighted down from his chariot and fled away on his feet." Passing through an encampment of the Kenites he came to the tent of Heber. And Jael, the wife of Heber, entreated him to enter the seclusion of her tent both for rest and for safety. "Walk in, my lord, walk in. Have no fear." It was a crafty lie on the lips of a cruel-hearted woman. We can almost hear the accents of

Lady Macbeth wooing the king to his death when she replied to his request for hospitality:

> "Your servants ever
> Have theirs, themselves and what is theirs, in compt
> To make their audit at your highness' pleasure
> Still to return your own. All our service
> In every point twice done, and then done double
> Were poor and single business to contend
> Against those honors deep and broad wherewith
> Your majesty loads our house."

The fleeing Sisera, in unsuspecting mood (for there was peace between his people and the Kenites), entered the woman's tent. He was perishing with thirst after fighting hard in the battle, and he said, "Give me, I pray thee, a little water to drink." And in ready mood Jael brought forth a bottle of sweet milk and gave him drink. "He asked water and she gave him milk."

Then, wearied by his flight, reassured by her kindness as to his safety and refreshed by the bottle of milk, he sank into a sound sleep. "Then Jael took a nail of the tent and took a hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him and smote the nail into his temples, for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died."

Turn it and twist it as we may, it was a cruel, treacherous, devilish trick. And when we read in the Triumphal Ode this extravagant praise pronounced upon her deed: "Blessed above women shall Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, be!" we realize that we are a long way from home as measured by the distance between the moral standards of that early time and our own Christian ideals.

The poem dwells with satisfaction upon the details of the murder. "She put her hand to the nail and with the hammer she smote off his head when she had pierced through his temples." It gloats over the sorrow which Sisera's mother would

suffer in his death. "The mother of Sisera looked out at a window and cried, Why is his chariot so long in coming?" It pictures the satisfaction the lusty soldiers of Israel would find in the spoils of victory. "Have they not divided the prey—to every man a damsel or two?" We can here understand why in their wars of extermination, when men, women and children were being slaughtered, the unmarried girls were kept alive, according to the accounts in the Scriptures. They were kept as spoil for the victorious soldiers.

It was a wild, rough time, and the moral standards were low. It boots nothing to cite the fact that the divine approval is claimed by those early writers for these coarse deeds. They made God in their own likeness and image—they attributed to him the qualities esteemed among themselves. Jehovah was "a man of war," teaching their fingers to fight and setting the seal of his approval upon whatever methods might be successfully employed in worsting their enemies. They had a long way to travel before they should reach that conception of the divine held before us in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"The historical value of the song of Deborah can hardly be exaggerated. It is the oldest extant monument of Hebrew literature and the only contemporaneous monument of Hebrew history before the foundation of the Kingdom." And we are profoundly grateful for this frank and accurate portrayal of the habits, the ideals and the religious conceptions of that early period of Hebrew history. It shows us out of what unpromising beginnings the divine spirit wrought out the movement which showed us at last the love and the glory of the Father.

What lesson, then, can we learn from this song of Deborah, with its fierce claim of a divine sanction upon deeds abhorrent to our moral sense? Let the Master of Rugby answer: "The

spirit of the commendation of Jael is that God allows largely for ignorance where he finds sincerity; that they who serve him honestly up to the measure of their knowledge are, according to the general course of his providence, encouraged and blessed; that they whose eyes and hearts are fixed on duty and not on self are plainly that smoking flax which he will not quench, but cherish until it be blown into a flame."

Chapter XV

THE CHARGE OF THE THREE HUNDRED

Judges 6, 7

Here was a young man summoned from a simple, commonplace form of effort to a high, exacting line of service. He was threshing wheat on his father's farm when he was called to command the armies of Israel in driving out the invading Midianites. He was divinely "called," not to preach nor to perform religious ceremonies, but to fight the battles of his country, which were the battles of the Lord.

The whole setting of this notable experience in the soul of the young man is simple and primitive, befitting the rude beginnings of the religious life of Israel. The call did not come as it came to Isaiah, worshiping in the Temple when he beheld the Lord "high and lifted upon his throne." It did not come as it came to Paul on the Damascus Road, with a light and a voice from heaven. The call came in terms suited to religious immaturity.

"The angel of the Lord came and sat under the oak which was in Ophrah which pertained to Joash; and his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites." The threshing floor was an exposed place liable to attack from the enemy, and the young man was furtively threshing his wheat under cover of the winepress. And while he was thus engaged in homely labor the angel of the Lord came and sat under the tree as a traveler might seek rest in the shade. It is characteristic of the Yahwistic narratives that

"the messenger of Jehovah" frequently appears in human form, entering freely into the abodes and pursuits of men.

The salutation of this mysterious visitant was friendly and reassuring. "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor!" But Gideon's heart was heavy because of the foreign invasion his country had suffered. "Oh, my lord," he replied, "if Jehovah be with us, why is all this befallen us?"

Then the divine messenger commissioned him for the great task of national deliverance. "Go in this thy might and save Israel from the hand of Midian." But the young man, conscious of his limitations, cried out in protest against the assumption of such responsibilty: "Wherewith shall I save Israel?"

Here we have the right mood for entering upon any high task—the sense of distrust in one's own powers prompting the feeling of reliance upon a mightier form of help. And the assurance of this re-enforcement was immediately forthcoming: "Surely I will be with thee! I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man."

He saw that there was a fight on between the higher and the lower. It is always on—the form varies but the struggle is unceasing. Now the scene is laid at Thermopylæ, where three hundred Spartans undertake to drive back the Persian hordes come to oppress the Greeks. Now it is laid on Marston Moor, where Cromwell's Ironsides march forth to win their victory for parliamentary government and for religious liberty. Now it is laid at Waterloo, where the principle of absolutism represented by Napoleon is combatted by the nations of Europe fighting for their integrity.

The scene changes, the weapons vary, the essence of the struggle remains the same. The lamb makes war with the beast. The higher finds itself opposed by the lower. The fight of Gideon and his three hundred against the Midianites

there in the Plain of Esdraelon three thousand years ago is but a single skirmish in the conflict of the ages.

The narrative says that the Lord preferred to win by few rather than by many lest the Israelites should boast. He was educating them in the sense of dependence upon and of co-operation with him for that vaster moral campaign upon which they were just entering. "Not by might nor by power but by my spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts," was to be their watch-word.

This is one side of the matter—there is also the human side. When Gideon ran his eye over his troops he saw that they were undisciplined. He felt uncertain as to what they would do under fire. He therefore issued this order—"Whosoever is fearful or afraid, let him return home." Twenty-two thousand quitters fell out from the ranks seeking ease and safety.

He looked upon those remaining and still uncertain, he subjected them to another test. He marched them across a brook which lay toward the enemies' camp, directing his officers to keep watch. The men who sprawled out upon all fours to drink from the brook were to be dismissed. Gideon would have in his command only those soldierly men who showed themselves alert and watchful while on duty, catching up handfuls of water to moisten their lips as they passed the brook without breaking ranks. This test still further reduced the number of his men to three hundred. But they were picked men!

He then stole down near the enemy's camp under cover of darkness to reconnoiter. He heard one Midianite tell another of his dream. The man had dreamed that he saw a cake of barley bread fall into the camp of Midian and strike with such force that a tent was thrown down. A cake of barley bread! It was a symbol of poverty—and Israel had been reduced to coarse fare by this invasion. It was a symbol of weakness

pitted against strength, a cake of bread flung against the stout tent of the Midianitish general. It was a symbol of obscurity —and Gideon felt himself "a cake of barley bread," a farmer called from his threshing to lead the armies of his country. He instantly accepted this dream of the soldier as a sign that he and his picked men would conquer the host of Midian.

His tactics were unusual, not to say fantastic, but they justified themselves. He directed each man to hide a lighted torch in an earthen vessel and with sword and trumpet girt on to steal into the enemy's camp at midnight. At a given signal each man was to smash his earthen vessel on the rocky ground, the torches were to flash out, the trumpets were to sound forth a loud blast, and with the battle cry, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon," shouted from every sturdy throat, they were to fall upon the Midianites.

The plan was carried out with notable success. The dull-witted Midianites, secure in the consciousness of superior numbers, had neglected to post pickets. Suddenly awakened from sound sleep, seeing the flash of torches and hearing the sound of many trumpets, they felt that some mighty host had fallen upon them. In their half-dazed condition, catching glimpses here and there of sturdy Israelites slaying right and left with broadswords, they were intimidated and overborne. They were put to flight by the men of Gideon and a notable victory was won for the higher, cleaner, more aspiring type of life represented by the men of Israel.

The incident brings out the fact that mere numbers are of secondary importance. "There is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few." One man sometimes chases a thousand where his cause is just, and two by God's help put ten thousand to flight.

The result is achieved not by some magical interposition but by the superior efficiency of a few disciplined men. It was

Cromwell who said, "Give me men who fear God and hate evil, who have faith and make some conscience of what they do, and no force that can be brought against them will be able finally to beat them back." The noble Three Hundred! They were alert, fearless, aggressive. Knowing that they could rely upon each other and upon God whose help is given to those whose hearts are right, they put to flight the host of Midian.

We see the same result in every-day life where men strive to achieve an honorable success. The young men who are alert, fearless, aggressive, doing with their might what their hands and their heads find to do, are being enrolled with Gideon's three hundred on many a field of effort. They are winning victories which fill all hearts with joy. The cowards, the sleepy-heads, the passive souls waiting for something to turn up are not in when the victories are passed around. They are on the other slope of Mt. Gilead bemoaning their luck.

We hear the wail about competition being so keen and all the conditions of success so disheartening to the man who stands at the foot of the ladder. But what are youth and health for if not to go out and measure their strength against heavy odds.

You cannot bridge all the rivers of difficulty which flow between you and the object of your desire. You cannot wait until some kind friend shall come to ferry you across—he may never come. Wade them! Put your own unwearied, undaunted strength into a heroic fight against those surging currents which would sweep you away, and boldly push ahead. The men who are doing just that are the men who share in the joy and the honor of Gideon's three hundred.

In the battle-cry two essentials are named: "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." In the last analysis the battle is the Lord's. It is the inevitableness of the divine purpose, pushing brave men into the conflict, holding them up to their hard task,

casting in on their side the mighty re-enforcements of One whose chariots are twenty thousand, which makes the final outcome sure.

But the battle on the field of Esdraelon was not won in the clouds nor by some bit of magic. The Midianites were not driven back by angels but by the swords of stout-hearted Israelites. "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon," for by the intelligent, resolute co-operation of forces human with forces divine, right triumphed over wrong.

In Victor Hugo's sketch of Waterloo he brings out elements sometimes forgotten. "Napoleon had already been impeached before the Infinite." Selfishness, cruelty, disregard for the rights of nations have been impeached before the Infinite from the foundation of the world. They are at war with the standing moral order.

But the divine impeachment on that field was only made effective when Wellington and the Old Guard, trained in their youth on the football fields of Eton and Rugby, trained in their maturity in a score of hard-fought battles, received the shock of that fierce attack of the French troops without giving way, and then gathering their full strength flung themselves upon the enemy and drove him back.

The sword of the Lord and of Gideon! The sword of the Lord and of Wellington! The sword of the Lord and of all brave souls who cause the divine impeachment to stand fast!

Chapter XVI

THE SORRY CAREER OF SAMSON

Judges 13-16

By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death. By faith Abraham went out not knowing whither he went. By faith Moses chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. "And what shall I say more? Time would fail me to tell of all the men who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, of Gideon and Barak, of Jephthah and of Samson."

Samson! Truly Saul is among the prophets if this rough, wild, fun-loving fellow is catalogued in the Book of Hebrews with the heroes of the faith! What extraordinary hospitality! The love of God is broader than the measure of our minds.

We read that he was the child of promise—an angel of the Lord announced his coming to the wife of Manoah. "And the woman bare a son and called his name, Samson. And the child grew and the Lord blessed him." The divine purpose makes use of all manner of tools in shaping its ends.

Samson stands out on the pages of Scripture a huge, overgrown, rollicking boy, looking upon life as one long, big joke. His major study was to turn the laugh on the slow, dull-witted, plodding Philistines who were the standing enemies of his country's peace. He rends a young lion and when a swarm of bees had settled on the carcass he devises a riddle which he propounds to the Philistines. He carries off the gates from

one of their cities in the spirit of our mischievous observance of Hallowe'en. He ties flaming torches to the tails of foxes and lets them loose in the Philistines' wheat fields, roaring aloud as he witnesses the havoc they work. He slays a group of Philistines with the jawbone of an ass and then puns upon the name of his homely weapon.

He was the joker of the pack, abundantly able in the days of his strength to take the trick. And in his death the element of humor was still present—he prayed in grim fashion for strength to be avenged upon his enemies "for the loss of one of his two eyes," as the Hebrew has it—he would leave the rest of the account to be settled later. He had them roaring with laughter when he pulled down the house upon their heads and killed them all.

The Bible is not a book of model men and women, or of nice little boys and girls, all neat and sweet, good enough to be angels without alteration. It is a book filled to the brim with blundering, imperfect folk like ourselves. Some things are written by way of instruction and some by way of warning. It brings out clearly the fact that God can use and bless those better elements in a faulty life where wheat and tare grow together until the harvest.

In this passage much is made of the fact that the mother of this burly giant was not to "drink wine nor any strong drink nor eat any unclean thing" before he was born. And he in turn was to be set apart for a life of abstinence. "The child shall be a Nazirite unto God from the womb unto the day of his death." In rigid fashion he was to be a total abstainer in the midst of a people accustomed to have their hearts made glad by the fruit of the vine.

He comes upon the scene as the child of prayer and of godly parents who coveted for him an honorable career. He was designed of God to be a judge in Israel, a leader of his people.

But just here he met a young woman who changed the whole face of his career. She was a Philistine and she worshipped strange gods. She had no more moral sense than a rat, but she was handsome and when Samson was with her he felt that he was in the Garden of Eden. He loved her in a young animal sort of way which added not one whit to his sense of the high sanctities of life—quite the reverse. He laid his head in the lap of self-indulgence which she offered him—it was all she had to offer—and when he rose he was no more fit to be a leader of men. His strength was gone "and he wist not that the Lord had departed from him." It was one of the unnoted losses of life.

The elements were mixed in him, the baser metal mingling as an unworthy alloy with the fine gold. "Samson had his laugh out of the Philistine men, but their sisters avenged them on him, making a slave and a tool and a fool of him. The old writer tells his story straight on without stopping to moralize, but where can you find a sermon on the need of personal purity like this? So magnificently strong, so fatally and contemptibly weak! Of the two forms of sin which especially assail young men Samson may guard us from the one by way of example and from the other by way of warning. Touching no wine he 'excelled in strength'; but he listened to Delilah and there followed weakness, darkness, the prison house, the grave."

He sternly refused the cup which cheers and also inebriates. He gave his heart and his confidence to that fair enemy of the divine purpose and she ruined him. There are other forms of intemperance more fatal to moral aspiration and a noble usefulness than indulgence in intoxicants.

"The wages of sin is death." If you doubt it, read the story of this defeated man so "strong and sunny" in his youth. He is now dead in his eyes as he blindly gropes his way about the

prison house in the land of the Philistines. He is dead in his muscles as he weakly turns the wheels of their mill—a task commonly assigned to the women of the tribe. He is dead in reputation—the fool and jester, brought to make sport at the tables of his captors.

"The Philistines took him," is the terse comment of the writer on his unhappy career. But his sins had already taken him captive, enslaving him to that which is lowest. "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin and the servant abideth not in the house." He was enslaved and cast out by his own evil passions.

His story is a tragedy any way you take it, by no means relieved by the vein of humor running through it. "The modern mind would repudiate the thaumaturgical element here. That any man was ever endowed with miraculous power because he was a Nazirite unshaven from birth seems out of harmony with the facts of experience. But cannot the plain, stolid Anglo-Saxon intellect see beneath the imagery here? Here is a man with a gift raised up for a great work and he must have been faithful to it up to a point or Israel would not have remembered him. But he became false to it by arrogant self-indulgence. And the worst of it was he is not the only one in history of whom it may be said that the gift departed from him, that his vocation was forfeited and at the end he himself was ignorant of the fact. He wist not that the Lord had departed from him."

But the positive lesson may well be laid to heart. The habit of indulgence in intoxicants makes against efficiency of every kind, physical, mental, moral, while the life of abstinence lends mighty aid to competent strength.

The letter of Lord Kitchener to every British soldier sent to the Continent in the great war is a classic. "You are ordered abroad as a soldier of the King. You have to perform a task

which will need your courage, your energy, your patience. Remember that the honor of the British army depends upon your individual conduct. Your duty cannot be done unless your health is sound. Keep constantly on your guard against excesses. In this new experience you may find temptations both in wine and women. You must entirely resist both and while treating all women with perfect courtesy, you should avoid any intimacy. Do your duty bravely. Fear God. Honor the King. Kitchener."

This was the note sounded on all sides. The French nation prohibited the sale of absinthe. The Czar stopped the use of vodka by his soldiers. The Kaiser issued the most drastic orders regarding excessive drinking by his troops. Military men charged with the stern responsibility of getting results know well that alcohol is the enemy of efficiency.

If it is good to be sober occasionally in war time and in the presence of the foe why not at all times in the pursuits of peace? Every man is set to guard some sacred interest though he carries neither gun nor sword. In that eternal warfare against hunger and cold, against disease and death, against poverty and crime, a war in which there is no discharge, why not have men at their best in mill and mine, on the farm and in the factory, in the counting-room and in the place of trade? The armies of industry sent to save, to feed and to clothe men's lives no less than the armies of bloodshed, are crippled by the subtle foe that steals away men's brains.

The economic forces are arrayed against the traffic. The man who thinks more of his job than he does of his grog has the floor. The wise railroad managers know that a tippler in the cab of the engine or at the flagman's post means sooner or later a frightful accident with loss of property and life. "Safety first" means "sober first."

The tax-payers are lined up against the traffic. They have

learned that the open saloon means added crime and poverty. The decent people have to go about cleaning up after the vile traffic and paying the bills entailed by the direful influence of rum.

The moral forces of the community were never so strongly arrayed against the traffic. They know that the liquor business has an ugly record. They see that it openly allies itself with the other immoralities, gambling, prostitution and all the rest. They are saying on all sides, "It must go."

The Lord told this country a century ago that it was too great to suffer injustice at the hands of George III and he raised up another George that under his leadership it might enjoy a new independence among the nations of the earth. The Lord told this country half a century ago that it was too great to be stained with slavery and under the leadership of Lincoln it had a new birth of freedom. And now the Lord has told this country that it is too great to suffer the rumseller, the gambler and the brothel keeper. Let it rise up and smite to the dust these enemies of its peace.

Chapter XVII

THE YOUNG WOMAN AWAY FROM HOME

Ruth 1

Here was a young woman leaving home! She was parting from her kindred and from all the associations of her girlhood. She belonged in the land of Moab but she was setting out to live among the Hebrews. Her name was Ruth and she bore herself in such a way as to make that name sound sweet the world over.

This young Moabite had come under the influence of an older woman who was a Jewess. Naomi represented a higher type of womanhood than Ruth had ever seen before. The grace of her manner and the kindliness of her heart, the beauty of her home as contrasted with the rude tents of the Moabites and the quality of her faith far in the advance of the coarse religious ideas of Moab, all made their appeal to the heart of the girl. "In a word, Naomi was a lady, the first lady Ruth had ever seen," and the soul of the girl was knit with the soul of the woman.

Naomi means "pleasant," and this "pleasant woman" who knew from her wider experiences the joys and the sorrows, the privileges and the perils which belong to womanhood, threw the mantle of her gracious influence around the girl. The heart of the younger woman made quick response—she would make permanent her relations with this fine friend. "Entreat me not to leave thee or to return from following after thee. Where thou goest, I will go; where thou lodgest, I will lodge. Thy people shall be my people and thy God, my God."

The religion of Moab was stained with cruelty and lust. The practice of human sacrifice and its unclean rites made it an object of loathing to the better instincts of a normal woman. Ruth rejoiced to find in the creed of Naomi a God who bade men honor their mothers as well as their fathers. Her heart responded gladly to those principles and ideals which inculcated purity between the sexes and threw a strong arm of protection around the weak. When the option was presented, Ruth made instant choice of the associations and the aspirations for which Naomi stood. "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God."

When the two women reached the land where Ruth was a stranger, Naomi guarded her in the associations she formed. She shielded her good name from reproach in the social habits she adopted. She introduced her in those quarters where it was desirable for her to have friends. The details of this action are beautifully wrought out in this lovely story of feminine friendship.

This kindly interest was maintained until Naomi saw the younger woman married to a good man, established in her own home and the happy mother of a child—a child that grew up to be the grandfather of David, the greatest king that Israel ever had.

By the friendship of an older woman the girl who was a stranger in a strange land, an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, was guarded and aided in those higher interests of her womanhood. She attained a worthy position in society; she built her life into "the house and lineage of David," from which should spring the Messiah; she rose to the full dignity and privilege of her womanhood, largely through the personal influence of this older woman whose name and nature were "pleasant."

The call for that type of friendly interest sounds out today from all the cities of our land. Ruth still comes in from the land of Moab. She comes up from the Maine woods and down from the green hills of Vermont to Boston; she comes in from "up-state" and from the villages of Pennsylvania to the great city of New York; she comes from quiet places in all the states of the Mississippi Valley into Chicago. Ruth is here in all the fresh, sweet promise of her girlhood facing the opportunity and the menace which await young womanhood in every great city.

The attractive girl employed in a large store or office may find there some man, possibly the one from whom she must take orders, ready to take advantage of her position. He will encroach little by little upon her maidenly reserve. He will offer her hospitality at the restaurants and at places of amusement until the way is paved for what may be a tragedy in the girl's life. Her mother is miles away; there is no one at hand to speak effectively the word of caution; the moral atmosphere is relaxing and before she sees the gravity of it all, it is too late. These somber chapters in the history of our day are being written out in all the cities where comely young women have gone out from home seeking employment.

The boarding house is a poor makeshift of a place for girlhood to unfold into womanhood. There may or may not be a parlor in it—if there is, the group of boarders collected there often makes it as attractive as Adullam's Cave. When the choice lies between the narrow hall-bedroom on "the third floor back," heated by a little gas stove which burns the oxygen out of the air and the roses out of the girl's cheeks, or roaming the streets or frequenting cheap places of amusement, the choice may easily fall on the wrong side.

When summer comes those girls are seen sitting in quiet,

secluded places in the public parks entertaining their sweethearts in the dark. The more fortunate need not look upon them with supercilious contempt—the chances are that nine-tenths of those girls began as modest maidens, reluctant to accept such places for the entertainment of their company. But in the boarding houses and crowded tenements suitable opportunities were lacking, and thus they accept the unworthy makeshift. These conditions which offer their menace to Ruth's modesty and to her honor, when she is away from home, are here. It is for Christian society to face them.

Young women who are strong and fine are able to resist all these temptations. The honor of the American young women who work is greatly to our credit as a nation. But young women are not all strong and fine—and even where they are, temptations sometimes persist and multiply to the danger point. As Victor Hugo said of Fantine, "Alas, if the Jungfrau had been hungry!" He meant not merely the hunger for bread but the hunger for pretty things to wear, for articles of ornament, for flowers and bonbons and entertainment to bring joy and zest into the life of monotonous work. Every healthy girl feels that hunger, and where the right means of satisfying it are not within her reach, the wrong means sometimes claim her for their prey.

Ruth is here in the big city clicking the keys of her typewriter, making entries in the books, standing behind the counter of the department store, working yonder in the factory. She is here! And away yonder in the land of Moab her father and mother, who sent her out pure and true, are looking to Naomi and to those institutions like the Young Women's Christian Association, which organize and institutionalize the spirit of Naomi, to safeguard the higher interests of her unfolding nature. The Father who designed her womanhood to be the fairest thing that should come from his creative hand

expects the Church to throw around her those aids which shall protect and minister to her highest development.

Let Naomi form personal friendships with all the Ruths within her reach! Let her now and then invite Ruth to her home! Let her put Ruth in the way of forming desirable associations! Let her minister to Ruth's unfolding by the personal contagion of her own fine ideals! Let every mature Christian woman secure in the advantages of her own home share in that gracious effort!

When holidays come, the dinner would taste ten times as sweet if some of those young girls away from home were there to share it with you. Hospitality given freely, expecting nothing again, is like the quality of mercy—it is twice blessed. It blesses those that give and those that take. There are families in our churches growing narrow, exclusive, selfish, for lack of just that widening of their sympathies. They need to let out a tuck here and there in their social interest, taking in those whose lives would be gladdened by the hospitality of a Christian home.

When the girl away from home is thus brought under the gracious power of some maturer woman whose ways are "pleasant" and whose heart is full of peace, she is moved to say like her forbear of old, "Entreat me not to leave thee. Where thou goest, I will go. Where thou lodgest, I will lodge. Thy people shall be my people and thy God, my God."

The spirit of Naomi is well embodied in the work of the Travelers' Aid Secretary, who meets the incoming trains and ships. There are girls coming from other foreign countries besides Moab. They reach our cities unable to speak English and because of their helplessness fall sometimes into evil hands. It means everything to have there a pleasant-faced, pleasant-voiced woman wearing a badge which is at once an introduction and a credential ready to render friendly service

and wise guidance. There are girls arriving in all large cities worthy to become the mothers of kings whose lives are wrecked by the human wolves that lie in wait.

The Book of Ruth standing here in Holy Writ is a most significant document. It tells us that history is not all made in kings' courts or on the battlefields where brave men shed their blood. In those quiet corners of human experience where the hearts of women are touched to finer issues by the gentle devotion of those who stand near, forces are set in motion which bring nearer the day of the Lord.

Chapter XVIII

THE BITTERNESS OF DEFEAT

1 Samuel 4-7

Here is a somber passage! We have to take the rough with the smooth, when we read scripture. The dedication of a high-minded, clean-hearted boy to the service of the Lord in the preceding chapter is here followed by an ugly, humiliating defeat of the people of God.

"Now Israel went out to battle against the Philistines." Here they were facing their long-time enemies but lacking both the individual valor and the competent leadership which in other days brought victory! There was no Samson at hand to slay them "ranks upon ranks" with the jawbone of an ass. There was as yet no David "who could sling stones at a hair's breadth and not miss" to vanquish a mighty Goliath. "When they joined battle, Israel was smitten before the Philistines."

They called a council of war. "The people were come into the camp and the elders said, Wherefore hath Yahweh smitten us today before the Philistines?" They could not bring themselves to admit their own inferiority to the hated Philistines. They could not by the terms of their faith admit that the deities of the pagan enemy were more powerful than their own Yahweh. Therefore it must be that for some inscrutable reason Yahweh had smitten them by giving victory to their foes.

The suggestion was made, "Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh that it may come among us and save us out of the hand of our enemies." The people in their

blind superstition and with the sense of reverence depleted by the weakened religious life of the period were ready to act upon this word of the elders. They went to Shiloh and brought up "the ark of the covenant" which had guided their ancestors in their wilderness wanderings. It had been the harbinger of victory at Jericho. In their hour of defeat they would claim the mighty re-enforcement which it symbolized.

How blind they were! They were intent on grasping the body of religion from which the soul had escaped. They were eager for the form of faith even though the substance had vanished from their stated observances. They were intent upon wheels within wheels; they liked to see them go round, but they were negligent of the fact that "the life-giving Spirit" no longer animated the process. They felt that because they had the symbol of religion they must possess the reality.

They have their modern counterparts. The men who feel that the divine presence and favor can be mechanically conveyed are first cousins to the dumb Israelites who thought when they carried the ark upon the field of battle, the Lord of Hosts himself was there fighting on their side. The men who regard the sacraments not as the useful signs of an inward and spiritual grace but as possessing a kind of magical charm whereby divine help can be passed about in physical fashion, follow in their train. The exaltation of the building or the liturgy or the special form of theological theory into such primacy of interest as to obscure the invisible spiritual energies which these things are set to represent, perpetuates the folly of those Israelites who thought to vanquish the doughty Philistines with a cedar chest.

"When the ark came into the camp all Israel shouted with a great shout." It was an empty noise based on an empty faith. The Philistines hear the shout, first with astonishment. "What meaneth the noise of this great shout in the camp of the

Hebrews?" When they understood that the ark of the Hebrew deity had appeared on the field of battle, it brought dismay. "Woe unto us! These are the gods that smote the Egyptians. Who shall deliver us out of the hands of these mighty gods?" Then they faced the situation with resolution. "Be strong and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not vassals to the Hebrews! Quit yourselves like men and fight."

The words with which they reassured their hearts on the eve of conflict have in them such a ring of moral courage that the greatest of the apostles borrows them from the lips of that uncircumcised Philistine to summon the moral reserves of his Christian converts into action. "Watch ye! Stand fast in the faith. Quit you like men—be strong."

Then the battle was joined. The swords of the rude Philistines clashed with the swords of the people of God. The Israelites as they saw the ark borne into action may well have uttered that historic war-cry of their race—"Rise, Yahweh! Let thine enemies be scattered." And the fight continued until there had been a very great slaughter—"there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen." The Israelites were hopelessly beaten. The ark of God was taken and borne away by the Philistines as a trophy.

The aged Eli had witnessed with a heavy heart the taking forth of the sacred ark. He now sat by the side of the road that led from the battlefield into Shiloh, waiting for tidings. Presently a man came running in, his clothes rent and dust upon his head. The moment he came near enough to be heard he shouted: "I am he that fled today out of the army! Israel is fled before the Philistines. There has been a great slaughter among the people. Thy two sons are dead. And the ark of God is taken."

It was a tale of woe, cumulative like the successive an-

nouncements of disaster which befell Job in the loss of sheep, oxen, camels and finally his children. The ears of this aged man, sitting there in darkness (for Eli was almost blind) were smitten by this frightful report of calamity upon calamity climaxing in the loss of the sacred symbol of Jehovah's presence among his people.

"The ark of God is taken! The divine symbol with its overshadowing cherubim and its sacred light was in the hands of the enemy! The ark that no Canaanite or Amalekite had ever touched, on which no Midianite or Ammonite had ever laid his polluted finger, which had remained safe and sure in Israel's custody through all the perils of their journeys and all the storms of earlier battles, was now torn from their grasp. It seemed to leave poor Israel without hope and without God in its world."

"And it came to pass when he made mention of the ark of God, Eli fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate and his neck was broken and he died, for he was an old man and heavy." He was ninety-eight years old and the hard blow of this crushing intelligence was too much for him—he lost consciousness and falling from his seat was instantly killed. How solemnly and awfully was the word of the young prophet who saw with clear eye the fate of persistent disobedience to God, fulfilled! Truly there was a prophet in Israel!

It was a tragic day in Israel's history. The heathen might say with apparent reason, "Where is thy God?" It seemed as if the divine favor and the divine presence had been utterly removed from among them—and it had been in consequence of their own wrong-doing.

The ark of God was in the hands of the Philistines. The story of its return to Israel is one of the most naïve passages in the Old Testament. When the Philistines found themselves

actually in possession of this mysterious chest which meant so much to their foes, they were disturbed—they felt almost as if they had captured Yahweh himself. When they placed the ark in the house of Dagon (one of their own gods) they found next morning that the image of Dagon had fallen from its pedestal. It was set up again, but the following night it fell again, breaking off the head and both hands. Dagon recognized the presence of a superior in the person of Yahweh, who dwelt in the mysterious ark and fell upon his face before this ranking deity.

The ark was then removed from the house of Dagon in Ashdod to Gath. But in a short time a plague of tumors came upon the men of Gath which they attributed to the presence of this foreign deity. He was apparently displeased with his residence. The ark was then removed to Ekron. But the people of Ekron suffered also from some mysterious visitation and they insisted that Yahweh be removed from their midst.

"Then the Philistines called for the priests and diviners saying, What shall we do with the ark of Yahweh?" The diviners counseled them to return the ark to the Israelites because it was evident that this foreign deity would continue to show his displeasure by afflicting them, as long as he was kept away from his people. "Send it not empty but return him a guilt offering; then ye shall be healed." They made therefore "five golden tumors and five golden mice" that the offering might match the form of the visitations they had suffered and be more readily understood.

They prepared a new cart—it would have been an affront to have offered the deity a cart which had already been profaned by ordinary use—and hitched up two cattle which had never been broken to yoke. They placed the ark on this cart with the golden offering. Then they allowed the cattle and the cart to go their own way. "If it (the ark) goeth up by the way of

its own border to Beth-shemesh, then he (Yahweh) hath done us this great evil. But if not, then we shall know that it was not his hand that smote us—it was a chance that happened to us."

And the fact that these cattle which had never been yoked up before did not loiter nor turn aside but took the straight road to the borders of Israel, thus returning the ark of Yahweh to its rightful possessors, was entirely convincing. Both the Israelites and Philistines felt that Yahweh had vindicated his honor. There was great joy in Israel and "the men of Beth-shemesh said, "Who is able to stand before the Lord?"

PART III
THE STORIES OF A KINGDOM

Chapter I

SAUL ANOINTED KING

1 Samuel 8-10

We find in these chapters before us further indication of the varying points of view in this history due to the presence of different documents introduced by the compiler. In one account Saul is chosen king by the Lord and anointed to that office with the approval of high heaven. In the other the very desire of the people for a king is an act of rebellion against God. In one account Samuel has judged Israel all his life, going in circuit from city to city to perform the duties of his office. In another he is an unknown man, the local seer in an obscure village, useful in helping men to find lost things. He was unknown to Saul, but Saul's servant knew about him (even as modern servants sometimes know more about clairvoyants than do their employers) and directed Saul to him when search was being made for the lost asses.

We may say that there are elements of truth in the varying points of view even though it is impossible to harmonize all the details into one composite narrative. The desire of the people for a king sprang originally from an unworthy motive. "Give us a king that we may be like all the nations; that our king may judge us and go out before us to fight our battles."

The military type of leader was what they had in mind. And the choice made was in plain fulfillment of that desire. Saul's qualifications as they are here set down (and as the sorry outcome of his reign proved) were mainly physical. He was a

handsome young man—"there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he." He was every inch a king if kings are to be measured in feet and inches—"from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people." He had the necessary build for a man who could go out before them and help fight their battles.

The people deem a stately, commanding presence essential to an ideal king. They want a man who looks the part. They want a face and a figure that will have the needed decorative value for state functions. His very appearance must impress the beholder as being royal.

The prophet of the Lord remonstrated with them when they made this shallow demand. He pointed out the burdens which this indulgence of their desire for the trappings of royalty might entail. "This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you. He will take your sons and appoint them for his chariots and to be his horsemen. He will appoint them for captains of thousands and captains of fifties. He will set some to plow his ground and to reap and to make instruments of war. He will take your daughters to be cooks and bakers. He will take your fields and give the best of them to his servants. He will take the tenth of your seed and the tenth of your flocks. He will take your men servants and your maid servants and put them to his work."

Here was a bit of work cut out for them. Here were the items in the burdensome program imposed by a military ruler with his head swollen by that malady known as "the divine right of kings." Court retainers and military officers, gardeners on the royal estates and craftsmen for the arsenal, domestics in the royal palace taken from the daughters of the free born and humbler menials from the ranks of the servant class, the commandeering of property for royal pleasure and

the exactions of taxes amounting to one-tenth of the natural income—these were the items in the menu which the headstrong people were demanding.

The people listened to Samuel's warning but would not give heed. "Nay, but we will have a king over us that we may be like all the nations." What a modern sound it has! "Like all the nations!" If certain nations refuse the appeal of reason and conscience for the establishment of a League of Nations where differences arising between nations may be adjudicated and settled according to the principles of law and equity; if certain nations "go in for" dreadnoughts and super-dreadnoughts, Krupp guns and huge standing armies, then forsooth, the jingoes of nations inclined toward the saner method will stir up their constituents to enter upon the same mad race for military supremacy. "Like all the nations"—it might have been uttered yesterday! The other nations had been preparing for war for the last thirty years and they got what they prepared for, as nations usually do. How long, O Lord, how long?

The people rejected the counsel of the prophet that they might follow the way of the world. Then the word of the Lord came to Samuel, "They have not rejected thee, they have rejected me that I should not be king over them." The order of the words brings out the emphasis—"Not thee but *Me* have they rejected." It was not the mere refusal of the counsel of their prophet—it was the forsaking of those national ideals and of that ultimate allegiance to which Israel was divinely called. It would be a burdensome, galling yoke which they were selecting for themselves, but it would be self-inflicted. "Ye shall cry out in that day because of the king which ye have chosen and the Lord will not answer."

The protest being unheeded Saul was chosen to be king. In

one of the narratives he was anointed secretly when he came to Samuel to inquire about the lost asses. "As they were going down at the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid thy servant pass on before us (and he passed on), but stand thou still that I may cause thee to hear the word of the Lord. Then Samuel took the vial of oil and poured it upon his head and kissed him and said, Is it not that the Lord hath anointed thee to be prince over his inheritance?" The main features in this ancient ceremony are still preserved in the coronation of a king in England. The Archbishop of Canterbury anoints with oil the king who comes to the throne, and the kiss of homage is given by the Archbishop, the bishops and the premier peers of the realm.

In the other account (1 Sam. 10: 17-27) the people are called together at Mizpah by Samuel the prophet in a public proclamation. "Now therefore present yourselves before the Lord by your tribes and by your thousands." Then lots were cast and the tribe of Benjamin was taken. Then lots of families and the family to which Saul belonged was taken. Then the further casting of lots brought out the fact that Saul, the son of Kish, was to be king. He was then and there proclaimed and the people shouted, "God save the king!"

We cannot read this story of the coronation as if we knew nothing of the subsequent career of the man thus elevated to a throne. He bore his honors most unworthily. He was a narrow, jealous, vindictive soul. He did not, like Duncan, bear himself so meek that all his virtues would plead like angels trumpet-tongued on his behalf. He was not a religious man apparently. "Saul also?" was a standing joke, for the thought of such a man among the prophets was most incongruous. His qualifications for leadership were mainly physical.

The Lord works with his fumbling, erring children, not as

he would, but as he can. When he cannot have our "level best" he takes what remains after some chosen vessel has been tipped over by awkwardness or wilfulness. In this situation he made the best of a desire which was not ideal in his sight. He accedes to the wish of the people for a king and gives the utmost of his grace, which this wilful nature is ready to receive, to make their king a blessing rather than a curse.

"God save the king!" they shouted in their new-found joy in the presence of a crowned head. They would better have turned their eyes within and have said in humble petition, "God save the people," for the man they were applauding would not show himself a wise or a worthy ruler over Israel.

The selection of the right men for places of power in any city or state or nation is one of the gravest obligations resting upon citizens intrusted with that duty. If the mayor is a rogue or a sycophant, if the governor is "on the make" rather than a man possessed by the spirit of service, if the congressman or senator is blinded by his political ambitions or corrupted by the rewards of predatory interests whose ends he seeks to promote, then "God save the people."

The path of honor and of usefulness was pointed out to the newly anointed king by the faithful prophet. "The spirit of the Lord shall come upon thee and thou shalt be turned into another man." Had he welcomed the transforming power of that "Spirit," his own history and the history of Israel would have been spared the ugly pages which follow. But, alas! he was content with the outward signs of a changed life, disdaining those more searching offices of true religion which purify the affections and renew the springs of action.

How unlike his mood to that which characterized our own greatest President in the face of the exacting responsibilities confronting him as the head of this nation in its hour of test-

ing! "I have been driven many, many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom and that of all about me seemed insufficient for the day." He that exalteth himself is by that attitude abased. He that humbleth himself is by that disposition exalted.

Chapter II

THE ROYALTY OF SELF-RESTRAINT

1 Samuel 11

Here is a story with enough of the savage, brutal quality in it to satisfy the heart of Jack London in quest of a fresh plot! Here is a story also with enough of the fine quality of magnanimity to invest the rudest situation with a sense of dignity and worth!

The chance for chivalrous action came in that out of the way region lying to the east of the Jordan. The inhabitants of Gilead felt on many an occasion that they had paid dearly for their whistle in settling upon those well-watered pastures. The assaults of the enemy were not long in coming and here the Ammonites, a fierce tribe of marauders—the Apaches of that day—were in hostile array.

The fearful men of Jabesh said to the enemy, "Make a covenant with us and we will serve thee." It was an act of personal cowardice, of social treachery to their fellow-Israelites and of impiety toward God to whom they owed an undivided allegiance.

The terms proposed by the Ammonites were shameful. Nahash said to them, "On this condition will I make it with you that all your right eyes be put out." He would impose this mutilation upon the cowardly men of Jabesh as a sign of vassalage and as a means of unfitting them for warfare. It would become "a reproach upon all Israel" to have enrolled among its members this poor-spirited, one-eyed community.

"The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." The men of Jabesh asked for an armistice. "Give us seven days' respite that we may send messengers unto all the borders of Israel. Then if there be none to save us, we will come out to thee."

The leader of the Ammonites felt such contempt for the military prowess of Israel that he granted them this truce, feeling a certain joy perhaps in prolonging their agony, as the cat plays with the mouse before eating it. Then the messengers of Jabesh came to Gibeah and spake these words in the ears of the people. "The people lifted up their voices and wept." Then they told their tale of woe to Saul and instantly a new note was struck.

"The spirit of the Lord came mightily upon Saul when he heard those words and his anger was kindled." The Scriptures show their breadth of view in boldly asserting that the spirit of God comes upon men not only to make them tender and forgiving toward their fellows, not only to make them reverent and devout before him—the divine spirit comes upon men no less to make them valiant and effective in their fight against evil. The active militant virtues are no less "the fruit of the spirit" than "love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness."

This man who stood head and shoulders above his fellows in physical stature "took a yoke of oxen and cut them in pieces and sent them through all the borders of Israel" with this peremptory message, "Whoso cometh not forth after Saul so shall it be done unto his oxen." It was a bloody summons to a bloody task. It was both a summons and a threat, making its appeal effective.

"The fear of the Lord came upon the people and they came out as one man." The question might be raised as to whether it was a pious fear of the Lord or a most human fear of Saul,

which lined them up. However, they mobilized with a promptness that might not unworthily be called Teutonic.

The response was such that Saul assured the messengers from Jabesh-Gilead that "tomorrow by the time the sun is hot ye shall have deliverance." The messengers returned to their people and with high confidence in the assurance given them by Saul made answer to the leader of the Ammonites, "Tomorrow we will come out and ye shall do with us all that seemeth good unto you." They thus gained the further respite needed to give time for Saul to make his attack.

Saul divided his men into three brigades and by a forced march at night was able to make an unexpected attack upon the Ammonites before daybreak. The men of that day divided the night into three watches. The "beginning of the watch" was from sunset until ten o'clock. The "middle watch" was from ten at night until two o'clock in the morning. The "morning watch" lasted from two o'clock until sunrise. The army of Saul "came into the midst of the camp in the morning watch and smote the Ammonites until the heat of the day." When noon came, the day's work was done. "And it came to pass that they which remained were scattered so that not two of them were left together." It was a victory swift, terrible, final.

The people of Jabesh were forever grateful for this deliverance from the hands of their enemies. The men of that community felt the debt of gratitude they owed to Saul and in the years that lay ahead they stood ready to meet it. It will be remembered that the men of Jabesh, at peril of their lives, rescued the bodies of Saul and Jonathan from Philistine insult after the Israelite defeat at Mount Gilboa and gave the bodies decent burial. The good that men do lives after them even in such unpromising communities as Jabesh-Gilead.

The victory of Saul over the Ammonites was out in the open where all could see. There was another harder struggle fought out in the depths of the man's own soul yet more honorable. When Saul was made king, "The children of Belial had said, How shall this man save us? And they despised him and brought him no presents. But he held his peace"—he paid no attention to this open insult.

Here again in the hour of his victory over the Ammonites, with its happy deliverance of the men of Jabesh, certain detractors said with a sneer, "Shall Saul reign over us?" It was suggested that the time was ripe and the occasion opportune to put an end to these copperheads. There was a cry from the crowd, "Bring the men that we may put them to death." But Saul, flushed though he was with military success, said calmly, "There shall not a man be put to death this day, for today the Lord hath wrought deliverance in Israel."

"He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his own spirit than he that taketh a city." He that taketh a city! "What pictures come before us in that phrase! Vision of old sieges, slow, heroic starvation behind moats and ramparts! Wolfe climbing the heights of Abraham in the dark, changing the control of half a continent by one night's work! Grant laying his miles of slow advancing entrenchments round the city of Vicksburg! Yet the writer of this proverb, with the audacity of vision of a peace delegate, declares that he who restrains his anger, he that ruleth his spirit, wins a better victory and shows a finer generalship."

When Saul showed a humane spirit toward his detractors in the hour of his triumph; when he manifested the fine quality of forbearance toward those who refused him their allegiance, he wrote his name higher in the annals of Israel than he did

in the winning of his victories over the enemies lined up against him on the field of battle.

Here is a list of manly virtues in an ascending series! "Now Naaman, captain of the host, was a great man with his master, the king of Syria; he was honorable because by him the Lord had given deliverance to Syria; he was also a mighty man of valor." He stood high in the favor and confidence of the King because of the service he had rendered to the state. He was held in high esteem by the people because of the deliverance he had wrought by his command of the Syrian armies. He was also, best of all, in his personal make-up, "a mighty man of valor," brave, patient, chivalrous in those harder battles which a man wages in the depths of his own soul.

Saul roused the men of Israel by his heroic appeal. He fought the Ammonites to a finish so that no two of them could be found together. He then showed his superb self-mastery in triumphing over the spirit of personal resentment toward those who would meanly detract from his renown. Here in this last high quality we find him at his best.

"Man looketh on the outward appearance"—he sees the victory over the Ammonites, the capture of Quebec, the fall of Vicksburg. "The Lord looketh on the heart"—he sees the self-restraint of some impetuous man which in his eyes is far more regal. It would have been quite in order for a successful fighter to have put his detractors where they could cause him no further annoyance. We have seen it in the Orient and we have seen it in Mexico. But this brave soul will have none of it.

His life was faulty; it went down at last in tragic defeat. How glorious it might have been could he have borne himself throughout in this high mood! But owning his weakness, his evil behavior in the later scenes of his troubled career, we may

well rejoice in the magnanimity displayed in the action here narrated. He was only a faint, uncertain streak in the dawning of that moral day when one would say: "Avenge not yourselves. If thine enemy hunger, feed him. If he thirst, give him drink. In so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

"What contributed the chief element of brightness to this scene was the sunshine of heaven. God was there, smiling on his children! Samuel was there, happy that Saul had conquered in a right noble way, acknowledging that God was the Author of the victory at Jabesh-Gilead. Saul himself was there, reaping the reward of his courage and of his forbearance. The people were there, proud of their king. Nor was the pleasure of any one marred by an ugly blot or an unworthy deed casting gloom over the transaction."

Chapter III

THE RECALL OF A KING

1 Samuel 15

We waste breath which would cool porridge when we try to square all the precepts and practices of the Old Testament (even though they claim divine sanction) with the ethical standards of Jesus. The word of the Lord came into human consciousness, first the blade, then the ear and away late in New Testament times the full corn in the ear.

Here was Samuel, prophet of the Most High, voicing what he regarded as the mind of the Lord! "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Go and smite Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have and spare them not. Slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." This was what the Pilgrim Fathers would have called "thorough"—it meant extermination, ruthless, complete, final.

Infant and suckling! One would have thought that the helpless children might have been spared. Ox and sheep, camel and ass! The poor dumb beasts had not offended. And the slaying of camels and asses could not be justified by the plea that they were needed for food. It was a way they had. It served as a token of the abhorrence in which they held the Amalekites who had begotten the helpless children and who owned the innocent beasts.

There is something to be said in mitigation. The people of Amalek showed themselves nasty, revengeful foes of the Israelites when Moses led them through the wilderness—that

debt, however, might have been regarded as outlawed by the statute of limitations which obtains in things moral as in things material. The Amalekites had joined with other marauders in some of the later attacks upon the Israelites—and the law "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life" had not been abrogated by the command of Him who came not to destroy but to fulfill the rude beginnings of moral order. The ancient promise made to Moses, "I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven," had not been fulfilled and Samuel felt it was high time for that pledge to be redeemed.

"Smite Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have"—that was the word which came to the ears of Saul as a divine message. However we may regard it from the higher level of thought and feeling where the Master has enabled us to walk, Saul had no manner of doubt but that it was God's own command.

In order that there should be no mixed motives it was to be the passionless execution of a judicial sentence. When Saul had destroyed the fierce tribe he was not to take their flocks and their herds for booty. The soldiers were to have no part in the spoils of war upon which victors commonly set their hearts. That would have reduced their action to the low level of a foraging expedition with the accompaniment of slaughter to render the stealing effective. They were not to stain the even virtue of their enterprise—in so far as it had virtue—by the spirit of greed.

Saul set himself to this grim task with keen relish. It was the sort of job his soul craved. "He smote the Amalekites and utterly destroyed the people with the edge of the sword." But just there his zeal halted—he spared Agag their leader for some reason of his own. And "the best of the sheep and the

lambs, of the oxen and of the fatlings" he also spared. "He destroyed utterly everything that was vile and refuse." The temptation of that rich booty was too much for his covetous soul. It was like the chance of finding money in the street. He could not bring himself to devote to destruction such a lot of good property lying easily within his reach.

He therefore undertook to whittle down the command of the Lord to a more reasonable, manageable size. He would not allow the Lord to show himself so ultra and radical in his moral ideas as to alienate the sympathy of practical men. He retained the best of the booty which he had been ordered to destroy.

When Samuel, who had conveyed to him this word of the Lord, came, Saul put a good face on the matter. "Blessed be thou of the Lord! I have performed the commandment of the Lord." He may have felt that he really had—a revised version, an expurgated edition, a modified plan of the original command received from on high, the alterations being of such a nature as to commend them at once to the practical mind.

But Samuel replied in searching fashion, "What meaneth then this bleating of sheep and lowing of oxen which I hear?" The telltale animals whose lives had been spared were blabbing out the truth in most ungrateful fashion. But Saul was ready with a pious reply. "They"—how vague and impersonal he is after the manner of sinners—"they have spared the best of the sheep and the oxen to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God. The rest we have utterly destroyed." He had disobeyed, but it had been done with most pious intent. The sacred end would surely justify the somewhat crooked means.

"I have performed the command, Saul says, but while he speaks, his sentences are punctuated by the lowing of oxen and the bleating of sheep. Whenever Peter tells a lie there is

a cock near by ready to crow. A man's conscience may be drugged so that it will not cry out against him, but some outside voice is sure to break forth in condemnation. If men will not do it then the animal creation will lift up its voice that God may not be left without witness. If the animals are dumb, then the inanimate earth will speak. Abel's blood will cry even from the ground. If conscience holds her peace, the very stones will rise and mutiny. Saul said nothing about the sheep, so the sheep supply what Saul forgot to mention. In their innocence they bleat out Saul's guilt. The universe is so constructed that a guilty man cannot hide his sin."

The seriousness of it all did not lie in the object of this disobedience, but in the subject of it. It was not the mere question of a few sheep more or less, dead or alive, as it chanced—it was the graver question of the moral attitude of a man in the place of political authority and religious leadership toward what he had believed to be his solemn duty. Would he obey the voice of the Lord in his own soul or would he follow the behests of some substitute motion skilfully gotten through the assembly of his moral faculties?

The stern old prophet had no patience with such shuffling. He blew away the pious excuses as chaff before the wind of his wrath. "Wherefore didst thou not obey?" There is the bottom question! There the issue is joined between those lines of action which in the long run make for peace, honor and prosperity and those which spell loss, ruin and final damnation. Why did you not obey?

Then follows what may be regarded as the high-water mark of prophetic utterance in the work of Samuel. "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams." The best of the sheep spared

that Saul might cover up his disobedience under a pile of ceremony—Samuel will have none of it! "Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft and stubbornness is as idolatry."

Then follows the judicial sentence which would have furnished a striking headline for the evening paper had there been such in that day—"Saul Rejected of the Lord." "Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He hath rejected thee from being king." With the same measure Saul meted it out, it was measured back to him again. The reaction any man secures from any set of forces, physical or spiritual, is determined mainly by the agent he introduces into the combination by his own act. Saul had rejected the word of the Lord, now he finds himself rejected.

The recall of this king was inward and spiritual rather than outward and visible. He still sat upon his throne. He still wore the semblance and discharged the functions of a king. His rejection lay in the fact that God no longer countenanced the validity of his rule nor employed him as the instrument of his good pleasure toward Israel.

We are not permitted to pick and choose among those high commands esteemed divine. The course of moral obedience to what is believed to be the will of God is not an elective—it is required. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." The Most Merciful uttered that straight word. He would not have the minds of men fuddled at that vital point. And when he was bringing his Charter Day Address to a climax, he did it in these telling words, "Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter the Kingdom, but he that doeth the will of my Father."

This man Saul had many an attractive quality, but he did not rise to the occasion. He stood head and shoulders above his fellows, but he failed in the work of moral leadership because

he lacked genuineness. He was acclaimed a sovereign; he was hailed with the shout, "God save the king," but he did not respond with those royal qualities of mind and heart whose right it is to rule.

How somber are the closing words of this fateful passage! "And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death. But Samuel mourned for Saul and the Lord repented that he had made Saul king over Israel." The curtain goes down with a look of sadness on the face of Saul, and on the face of Samuel, and on the face of God!

Chapter IV

DAVID ANOINTED KING

1 Samuel 16

The story opens with a sharp rebuke. "How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him?" the Lord said to Samuel. The prophet's grief over Saul's failure was natural. Samuel had anointed him to be king; he had stood sponsor for him. There was a warm attachment between the two men. Samuel grieved also for the nation. A change of administration, then as now, might mean a period of uncertainty and loss. The rejection of Saul was a hard blow to him both as friend and patriot.

But genuine grief may exceed its rightful limits. There is a natural, healthy sorrow for what is gone, and there is a morbid, unreasonable clinging to what cannot be recalled. When we stagger under the first shock of some terrible loss, God does not expect us to stand erect. When our eyes are blinded with tears he does not expect us to see things as they are. But as we walk on he does expect us to adjust ourselves to changed conditions; he looks for our vision to clear. The mother who mourns the death of one child until she forgets her duty to the children who are alive will hear the same word, "How long?"

"I have rejected him. . . . I have provided me a king among his sons." Kings come and go, but the kingdom abides. The servants of God appear and disappear, but his work goes on. "After the death of Moses, the Lord spake to Joshua." After the recall of Saul, the divine election lifted David to power.

The importance of a single individual is often exaggerated. The life of a church is said to depend upon the ministration of a particular pastor. The loss of a certain generous, devout layman would mean, it is asserted, the death of the church. But where the rank and file are faithful, the loss of one particular leader does not spell defeat. The Lord has a way of laughing at these prophets of despair as he brings success out of what was called hopeless failure. "Every man learns sooner or later that he can take a day off now and then without deranging the whole solar system." When Samuel was mourning Saul's rejection as a loss beyond remedy, the voice of God, through the logic of events, was already saying, "I have provided me a king."

In some wise way the door of each opportunity opens to admit a man adequate for the task. When the time is ripe for the Reformation, Luther is ready. When the hour has struck for American slavery to be destroyed by words and laws and grapeshot, Wendell Phillips and Abraham Lincoln and Ulysses S. Grant are ready. Back of all the emergencies God stands in waiting. When the fulness of time has come, he brings his man upon the scene.

Samuel went, therefore, by divine command to Bethlehem. He joined with Jesse and his sons in a religious feast. His mind was busy meanwhile selecting the son to be made king. The firstborn, the tall and handsome Eliab, came before him. His physical endowments recalled the former king, who stood head and shoulders above his fellows. The heart of Samuel leaped to the conclusion, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before him."

The prophet was wise and good, but he was a man of like passions with us, sharing in our liability to err in judgment. Here he was instantly reproved not for a single mistaken judg-

ment, but for the principle employed in making his appraisement. "Look not on his countenance or on the height of his stature," the voice said, "for I have rejected him." Tall men are not always noble. Regular features may not mean regular conduct.

The time had come for a higher principle of selection. The former king had been chosen mainly because of his physical excellence—he turned out a moral failure. He fought successfully against the Ammonites and the Amalekites, but the net result of his influence on the life of Israel was bad. In the face of this defeat a new principle is announced—"The Lord seeth not as man seeth. Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." There must come a man possessed of those inner qualities of faith and hope and love which will cause him to become at last "a man after God's own heart."

The Lord seeth not as man seeth! This principle of discrimination, this steadfast look at the real inwardness of things, is the central thought of the passage. Man looks habitually on the outward appearance—stature, features, dress, manners and the like. The Lord's eyes, like the X-ray, see all the way through.

There are churches bearing the name of Christ which live mainly in the externals. "Let everything be outwardly correct, the building beautiful, the music excellent, the sermon able, the congregation large and respectable! What a pattern such a church is often regarded! How unsatisfactory it may really be to God! The lowly sense of personal unworthiness and the wondering contemplation of divine love, the longing for grace to help, the kindness that breathes its benediction upon all, the love that bears and believes, hopes and endures all things, these inner qualities which alone please God, may be sadly lacking."

The same canon of judgment might well be applied to some of the current efforts at reform. The social effort may wear an attractive look, but what about the heart of it? In the last analysis what will it do for the soul of the man, for the man who lives within all this outward prosperity or, if so be, this outward adversity?

Many efforts at social reconstruction are doomed to defeat because they are not sufficiently spiritual. They seek to provide for the feeding and housing of men, for keeping men steadily employed and equitably paid. These are good things —even as good looks, noble stature and engaging manners are good things—but they do not go to the root of the matter. There is an inner life to be faced and provided for. The only social efforts worth while are those which undertake also to bring the heart into harmony with the divine will, the spiritual nature into co-operation with the enfolding moral order. We cannot anoint any social transformation and call it king unless it sees as the Lord sees.

Thus instructed as to the right principle of selection, Samuel passes in review the remaining sons of Jesse. He now realizes that he cannot put a man on the scales and weigh him or stand him against the wall to be measured, and thus determine how much man there is. The young men pass by, one after another, and the prophet gravely says, "The Lord hath not chosen this." Then he adds, "Neither hath the Lord chosen this." When his eyes fall upon the last of the sons, he announces, "The Lord hath not chosen these."

"Are here all thy children?" he asks. Jesse replied: "There remaineth yet the youngest. Behold, he keepeth the sheep." The task of keeping watch over the flock was often intrusted to children or to slaves. The very reference to his present employ seemed, therefore, to put David out of the running.

But God ignores our petty conventions in making his elec-

tions. His choices move across lots, breaking down the fences men build along the lines of succession. Here, as everywhere, the Lord saw not as men saw. David was immature; he had done nothing kingly as yet; he was unversed in the duties of high position; he was all in the bud.

But the Lord looked beneath the surface; he saw inside that shepherd boy a king. Time only was required to cause the essential royalty of his nature to live and grow and sit upon its throne. Here was one destined to come from the sheepfold to found a noble dynasty. From "the house and lineage of David" there would come at last One worthy to be crowned King of kings and Lord of lords, to reign for ever and ever.

The Lord habitually anoints the unseen man, the man within the man, the man who is yet to be. He deals with men not according to their present achievements, but with reference to their aptitudes, their capacities, their inner fitness to unfold under the stimulus of the larger chance that lies ahead. He takes into account the hidden possibilties unrealized as yet.

"David was only a stripling when Jehovah said, 'I have provided me a king.' The king was there under the shepherd's cloak, visible to the eye of God. Men saw in Dwight L. Moody only a country boy selling shoes. They saw in John B. Gough only a hopeless drunkard. They saw in Jerry McAuley only an abandoned river rat. But God saw in each case the hidden man, and said, 'I have provided me an apostle.'"

David was an outdoor man. He lived close to the soil, close to the sheep, close to the things that breathe and grow. How much of rugged strength, of homely common sense, of firm grasp on things vital has been developed in the healthy youth who is country bred. How many men in Boston's Blue Book of commercial and professional success came from "The Cape" or "Down in Maine," from the Berkshire Hills or from the Granite State.

"Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brethren; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward." The young man was fitted for the throne not by learning tricks of royalty or shrewd exploits of diplomacy. His preparation was not outward, but of the heart. The usefulness of his later life is foreshadowed in that one great sentence. If any man would be great in those qualities which abide, the Spirit of the Lord must fit him for his high task.

Chapter V

THE WAGER OF BATTLE

1 Samuel 17

The president of one of our great American universities had been teaching his boy Bible stories. The father is an expert scholar, well versed in the Scriptures. He made a profound impression on the boy's mind with those stirring narratives and at the end of two years' study he asked him one day, "When you get to heaven what Bible character would you most like to see?" He thought that Joseph with his romantic career, or David making his way from the sheepfold to the throne, or possibly the Master himself coming out of the carpenter shop to take the moral government of mankind upon his shoulder, might well have made the strongest appeal. But to his consternation the piously trained ten-year-old promptly answered, "Goliath."

The period of hero worship has its hour with us all. There is a time when physical prowess makes potent appeal. The story of the duel between the stripling with his sling and the giant from Gath enlists the eager interest of the children and is not without its fascination for their elders and betters.

The Philistines and the Israelites were drawn up in battle array. They were encamped on the opposite sides of a valley. The Philistines had as their champion this fighter named Goliath. He was a huge fellow nearly ten feet in height. His armor weighed a hundred and fifty pounds. His spear was like a weaver's beam. These various items are noted as indicating how invincible he seemed.

The Philistines felt that the hour had struck for them to be avenged upon Israel for the pranks and defeats they once suffered at the hands of the merry and mighty Samson. They now had a strong man of their own. After the manner of similar contests recorded in the Iliad, they were ready to let the issue of the campaign turn upon the result of a solitary combat between Goliath and any Israelite put up against him.

Morning after morning for the space of six weeks the huge fellow came out to the edge of the valley to insult and defy the armies of Israel. "Why are ye come out in battle array?" he cried. "Am I not a Philistine and ye servants of Saul? Choose you a man and let him come down to me. If he be able to kill me, then we will be your servants. But if I prevail against him, then ye shall be our servants. I defy the armies of Israel this day. Give me a man that we may fight."

"When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine they were dismayed and greatly afraid." It went on day after day, their sense of humiliation adding cubit after cubit to its stature. Yet not a man of them dared to cross swords with the giant from Gath.

There came a day when the youthful David, sent by his father to carry extra rations to his brothers at the front and to bring news of the campaign, appeared in camp. His older brothers chided him for having left his sheep that in the pride and naughtiness of his heart he might see something of the battle. But David, apprised of the humiliating position of the armies of his country, replied, "Is there not a cause?"

He inquired as to the prizes offered to the man who would fight the Philistine. "What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine and taketh away the reproach from Israel?" He was not interested in the reward held out—he was seeking to solve the mystery of this unaccepted challenge. It seemed

a thing incredible that such a situation could arise. "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?

David was informed that to the victor had been promised the freedom of his father's house from taxation and great riches and the hand of the king's daughter in marriage. But without result—no man dared to brave the strokes of the invincible Goliath.

Then spoke the voice of faith from out the heart of undefeated youth. "Let no man's heart fail because of him—thy servant will go and fight this Philistine." The king remonstrated with this uncalculating courage which would set untried youth against a disciplined man of war. But David insisted that his rough and tumble experiences with the lions and the bears which attacked his sheep had provided him the needed training. The king offered his own armor—for the king would naturally have the best suit of armor—that the stripling might in some measure be protected in the unequal contest. But after trying on this cumbersome equipment David put it aside. "I cannot go with these for I have not proved them." He disdained the orthodox, conventional modes of defense and out of his own experience chose those tested weapons which he found effective. He took five smooth stones from the brook and with his sling in hand professed himself ready for the fray.

The Israelites and the Philistines were drawn up on the slopes of this natural amphitheater to witness the outcome of this strange combat. The principals were put forward. The Philistine was enraged when he saw the stripling they had sent against him. "Am I a dog," he cried, "that thou comest to me with a club?" He cursed David by his gods and threatened to give his flesh to the fowls of the air and the beasts of the

field. Like certain modern combatants, "Goliath was mighty with his mouth." His tongue was like a weaver's beam. He had been smiting the poor Israelites with its stinging insults.

David was undisturbed. His weapons had been taken from the arsenal of experience and his courage came from the same reliable source. "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion and the bear will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." The moral triumphs of the boy become the harbinger of the triumphs of mature manhood. The boy who disdains to lie or to cheat, to stoop to uncleanness or to show himself a coward, knows how to bear himself when the hard tests of middle age assail him. "The Lord that delivered —— will deliver ——." Fill in the blanks out of your own experience! The statement still holds good!

The stripling's faith contributed to his courage. His trust in God kept his nerves steady so that he was still able in the presence of that roaring giant to "sling at a hair's breadth and not miss." His moral passion as he came forth to lift the reproach from the banner of his nation gave strength to his arm.

It was moral force pitted against brute strength. The scornful self-confidence of Goliath trusting in his coat of brass and in his arm of flesh was opposed by the spirit of faith as the source of a finer form of valor. Here was the contrast voiced in David's own challenge to the advancing foe. "Thou comest to me with sword and spear! I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, whom thou hast defied." The forces seemed unequally matched to those who saw but the outward appearance. Yet to the eye of insight, adding to the muster-roll those unseen energies which are mighty through God to the casting down of strongholds of evil, victory rested already upon that strength which is from above.

The huge Philistine came on brandishing his spear and roaring out his wrath against his puny antagonist. David saw the unprotected spot below the visor of his helmet. He took one of the five stones and slung it with such force and precision that it struck Goliath in the forehead and knocked him senseless. David ran quickly and took the Philistine's sword and cut off his head, holding it aloft in the eyes of Israel as a trophy. The Philistines fled in sudden fear and the men of Israel pursuing them in their rout won a notable victory. Thus reproach was removed from the armies of the living God.

"The victory which overcometh the world is always of our faith. We must keep what Ruskin calls with reference to artists 'the primitive innocence of the eye.' Cynicism and *ennui* must be counterbalanced by the sanguine idealism so well exemplified by each June's graduates from school and college. This innate hopefulness ought to be retained through all states of life. For those who believe in God there are always more lands to be possessed. It is their lasting prerogative to go forth 'with the rays of morn on their white shields of expectation.' "

In the last analysis "the battle is the Lord's" and he saveth not alone with sword and spear. There are sentiments and principles deep-rooted in a nation's life mightier than the heaviest battalions. There are devotions and enthusiasms which outwear the largest collections of munition and equipment. There are habits of thought and tenaciously cherished ideals which constitute a more reliable defense of the citadels of a nation's life than all the ramparts and battlements devised by strategists. Let all the earth know that there is a God in Israel and in Europe and in this broad land of ours! In his great hands are found the final issues of each campaign.

The unregenerate world, strong in the resources of its own

carnal might, is often contemptuous as it faces the modest equipment and the slender resources of the average church. The thought that any substantial deliverance can come from these unseen spiritual forces for which the church stands seems all but ludicrous. Let the forces of righteousness stand ready as Jesus did to stake their all upon the power of instruction and persuasion, spiritual appeal and right example! Let them move along that line of effort undaunted, for in the end, if they are faithful, the whole method of life for which Goliath stands will bite the dust.

Chapter VI

THE DEADLINESS OF PERSONAL JEALOUSY

1 Samuel 19

"Saul spake to Jonathan his son and to all his servants that they should kill David. But Jonathan, Saul's son, delighted much in David." Here are all the necessary ingredients for a family tragedy. Here are the nitre, the sulphur and the charcoal—all of them in themselves useful materials for the service of man—but combined in given proportions they furnish the gunpowder to shatter the peace of that household.

The hatred of Saul for David sprang out of military jealousy. When Goliath had defied the armies of Israel, Saul even though he stood head and shoulders above all his fellows did not dare to face him. It was left to David to win the plaudits of the army by his victory over the giant from Gath.

When the soldiers returned from that successful campaign, "the women came out of all the cities of Israel singing and dancing." How true to life it is! Women to this day have a way of indicating that their gentle hearts are strangely stirred by the sight of marching men in khaki. When the ball is given, if the Army and Navy are represented the poor civilian is all but ignored in the bestowal of feminine interest. The joyous acclaim given to these returning victors by all the women of Israel quite accords with current custom.

"And the women sang one to another in their play and said,

> "Saul hath slain his thousands,
> And David his ten thousands."

This was not melody and harmony to the ears of the older hero—it was a crash of discord. "This saying displeased him and Saul was very wroth." He was not great enough to rejoice in the personal prowess of a younger man who had brought deliverance to his own troops and had taken away the reproach from the armies of Israel. "What more can he have but the kingdom," Saul said with a growl. "And Saul eyed David from that day."

We need not go back to ancient times nor to foreign lands to find the outcroppings of this same spirit of military jealousy. There were officers even in the Revolutionary War who seemed to think more of the amount of gilt braid on their uniforms than of the service they could render to the Colonies. The twenty years of wrangling between the commanders at Lake Erie, the disgraceful personal squabbles between officers in the Mexican War and the dreary controversy in the newspapers after the battle of Santiago de Cuba in the Spanish War over the measure of credit to be given respectively to Sampson and to Schley, all bear witness to the persistence of this ugly trait.

The deadliness of jealousy may not always find expression in destroying the object of its dislike but persisted in it kills the finer life in the heart which cherishes it. It is a malignant germ. It leads inevitably to blood poisoning. Unless its ravages are checked, it may issue in death. In this passage we find the most promising young man in Israel hated and hunted like a wolf by this madman become insanely jealous.

Through the kindly offices of Jonathan there was an apparent reconciliation between Saul and David. We must conclude that either this narrative came from some other source than that which furnishes us the main events in this chapter or else the reconciliation was only a pretense on the part of Saul. The story of the reconciliation is followed immediately by the ac-

count of an open attempt on David's life by the maddened king. "An evil spirit from the Lord was upon Saul as he sat in his house with his spear in his hand and Saul sought to smite David to the wall with his spear, but he slipped away out of Saul's presence and he smote the spear into the wall." The attempt at murder failed because David was quick of eye and fleet of foot as shown in his encounters with the lions and the bears that attacked his sheep.

"Then Saul sent men to David's house to watch him and to slay him in the morning." The cruelty of this attempt on the young man's life was devilish. He had just been married and his bride was Saul's own daughter. The young wife was true to her husband, turning against her own father in his wicked purpose, and she saved David by a clever ruse. She let down David through a window. She then placed in his bed a life-size image, "the teraphim," putting a pillow of goat's hair under its head and covering it with clothes until it looked like the figure of a man. She told the messengers that David was ill, pointing to the bed to confirm her statement. The ancient Israelites like the modern Arabs slept with their heads covered, making easy this deception.

The men reported to Saul the fact that David was sick in bed —even their hard hearts had been touched with pity by the look of concern in the young wife's face and by the sight of the figure in bed. But Saul gave them this terrible commission: "Bring him up to me in the bed that I may slay him." He would have the ugly satisfaction of slaying his successful rival with his own hand. When the messengers again reached the house of David they discovered the image in his bed. David was already miles away.

But Saul's rage was unappeased. It was so manifestly a condition bordering on insanity that the popular diagnosis attributed it to "an evil spirit" even as lunatics in the time of

Christ were popularly supposed to be "possessed of demons." "Saul sent messengers to take David, but when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying and Samuel standing as head over them, the spirit of God came upon the messengers and they also prophesied." The reference is plainly to some form of religious frenzy not unlike the nervous ecstasy of the modern dervish as he is transported out of his normal condition by spiritual ardor. The nervous exaltation of those who were called "Nabi" was contagious and was presently shared by Saul's messengers.

When Saul had sent three delegations of messengers to Naioth to bring David, and each group of men had been rendered ineffective for his murderous purpose, by contracting this religious contagion, he came himself. And he was similarly overcome. He fell in helpless and unseemly fashion into a religious trance. "The spirit of God came upon him also and he prophesied. He stripped off his clothes and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Wherefore they said, Is Saul also among the prophets?"

We have here the manifestation of religious enthusiasm on a very low level. The abnormal nervous condition induced by certain appointed forms of stimuli seemed to the undiscerning a state bordering upon the supernatural, but it had little or no moral significance. The fruits of the spirit are not found in physical excitement or in any outward frenzy—"the fruits of the spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, mildness, self-control." The religious development of the common people in Israel had still a long way to go before the word "prophet" would be clothed with the splendid meaning it wears for us.

"But Jonathan, Saul's son, loved David as he loved his own soul." The friendship is the more remarkable when we remember how the two men were placed. It was a friendship

where the younger man was a formidable rival in those aspirations which might naturally be cherished by both. Jonathan was the eldest son of the king, the heir to the throne, the natural successor of Saul. David, by his military prowess, had come to be esteemed by the people as a worthy successor for the throne. He had been anointed by Samuel, the prophet, as a worthy candidate for that place of distinction. Yet Jonathan, who had least to gain and most to lose by protecting the life of his friend, makes his affection a thing resplendent by its sheer unselfishness. He must have known that David would increase while he must decrease, yet the sky of affection was unclouded by a touch of jealousy.

Chapter VII

THE HIGH QUALITY OF MERCY

1 Samuel 26

Here is one of the great night scenes of the Bible! The region is lonely and forlorn; it is "the wilderness of Ziph." The camp of the king is quiet. The three thousand soldiers are all asleep. Only the wild beasts are abroad, seeking their prey by stealth.

"Saul lay sleeping within the barricade of wagons, with his spear stuck in the ground at his head," even as "the lance standing erect is now the sign of the sheik's headquarters among the Arabs." And suddenly the glory of a gentle deed shone round about them, resplendent against the dark background of that cruel age.

David had been hunted through the fastnesses of Judea with bloodhounds as though he had been a fugitive from justice. He had felt for months that as the Lord lived there was but a step between him and death at the hands of the murderous men Saul had sent to take his life. He had felt the hateful injustice of it all. For many a man it would have meant that his heart would have become bitter as gall and the face of his soul like ink.

But here was a man with a heart to forgive. He crept into the camp of the man who had been a relentless foe at peril of his life, with a single trusted lieutenant at his side. He stood in the silence and darkness of the king's own tent. He caught up the spear which was stuck in the ground at the king's head. He had his enemy utterly and finally within his power.

Then his companion, knowing the long, dark story of unmerited persecution, whispered to him that the time was ripe for action. It seemed to his dull mind that all the circumstances were providential. "Abishai said to David, God hath delivered up thine enemy into thine hand this day. Now, therefore, let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear to the earth at one stroke; I will not smite him the second time." One swift blow would suffice to pay off the score.

He had a show of justice on his side. Here at his feet was the man who had sent paid thugs to take the life of the one to whom he had given his own daughter in marriage. Here was an enemy who had come with three thousand soldiers, sleeping in that very camp, to slaughter his rival in the affections of the people. Here was a foe who had been going about like a roaring lion to destroy the closest friend of his own son. David also might have felt with his faithful companion, who reached for the spear of requital, that the time was ripe to remove this relentless foe from the face of the earth.

David lived when "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" was the law of the land. It was accepted as a law from on high. The atmosphere he breathed was not one of forbearance. The popular heroes were men like Samson and Gideon or women like Deborah and Jael, who did not hesitate to strike down their enemies.

The higher and the lower instincts of healthy manhood contended within him that night for the mastery. The higher had its way. "David said to Abishai, Destroy him not. The Lord forbid that I should put forth mine hand against the Lord's anointed." He respected the office of the king, disgraced though it was in those hard days by its sorry incumbent. "But take now, I pray thee, the spear that is at his head and the cruse of water, and let us go. And they got them away and no man saw it, neither did any awake, for they were all asleep."

Greater is he that ruleth his own spirit than he that taketh a city.

"Peace hath its victories no less renowned than war." Mercy has its trophies no less than force. They bore with them the spear and the cruse of water from the king's tent as valid exhibits of their forbearance when that enemy who had hunted them to the death had lain helpless at their feet. Here was a man who would not avenge himself. He felt that vengeance belongeth unto God. Here was a man who long ages before the ushering in of the dispensation of mercy will live, if it be possible, peaceably with all men. Here is one who will make the bold adventure of undertaking to overcome evil with good.

David belonged to that race whose Shylock said,

> "If I can catch him once upon the hip
> I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him."

But he belonged also to that race whose prophet said, "What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God?" He belonged to that race from which came the world's Messiah amid songs of peace and good will, with these benign words upon his lips, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

When David and his companion had exercised this self-restraint they climbed an adjoining crag and called out to the king's body-guard. They showed him the cruse of water and the spear in the dim, uncertain light of the new day that was breaking, and reproached him for not keeping closer watch over the person of his chief. Saul, by the hearing of the ear and by the pricking of his conscience, recognized that well-known voice, "Is not this thy voice, my son David?"

Then David called upon him to answer whether the external influences which had rendered him unlike himself were human or superhuman. "If it be the Lord that hath stirred thee up

against me, let him accept an offering. But if it be the children of men, cursed be they before the Lord."

In the presence of this generosity the heart of Saul was touched. "I have sinned," he said, "I have played the fool. I have erred exceedingly. Return, for I will no more do thee harm because my life was precious in thine eyes this day." David stood there on the heights not of "the hill of Hachilah"; he stood there on Mt. Forbearance, pronouncing his words of grace upon the troubled heart of a guilty king.

When Saul was dead, David came at once to the throne. "The men of Judah gathered at Hebron and there they anointed David King. He sought guidance from on high as he received the crown. David inquired of the Lord saying, Shall I go up? And the Lord said, Go up."

We are told that when the young girl of sixteen at Kensington Palace was apprised of the fact that William IV. had passed away and that she was Queen of England, she immediately fell upon her knees imploring divine help and guidance in the high duties imposed upon her. May it not be that this was the secret of her beneficent reign for more than sixty years! And the high mood in which David faced the new honors and responsibilities of his position had much to do with the fact that he reigned for forty years, the greatest king that Israel ever had.

In prophetic mood he will have the democratic note struck clearly in his elevation to the throne. "His men that were with him did David bring up, every man with his household." "Then came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron." "So all the sheiks of Israel came to Hebron and David made a covenant with them before the Lord." He placed slight emphasis on "the divine right of kings," but rested the weight of his appeal for support upon the consenting loyalty of the people to one who might worthily serve their interests.

He would rule through the confidence and esteem of his people. He would not be "imposed" upon them in arbitrary fashion—he would be "elevated" to the throne by their voluntary allegiance. He anticipated the political methods of a later day in that he held that "governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed."

His earliest action was an earnest of his method. He won the hearts of the people by his capacity for administration. His ready sympathies guided him instinctively in paths of wise political action. The people felt that their profoundest aspirations were finding direct expression in the policies of their ruler. "He was their shepherd according to the integrity of his heart and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands." The response was universal and immediate—"All the people took notice of it and it pleased them; as whatsoever the king did pleased the people."

We shall be interested in studying the wise patience displayed by this young man who here comes to the throne. He is to develop those principles and policies designed to make Israel a Messianic nation in whose unfolding life all nations of earth are ultimately to be blessed. His swift victories over the lion or the bear in early youth and his instant success in personal combat with the giant from Gath were followed by years of patient, painstaking, statesmanlike effort on Israel's behalf, laying those foundations on which her moral greatness was securely built.

Chapter VIII

"THOU ART THE MAN"

2 Samuel 11, 12

Here is a dark page in the record of a life which had much of brightness in it! But the story bears faithful witness to the fidelity of the men who wrote these narratives. They did not blink the uglier facts. Here in black and white—mainly black—are set down the moral blemishes they found upon the character of the greatest king that Israel ever had.

He was walking at nightfall on the roof of the king's house. He could look over into the inner courts of the adjoining houses. He saw there a woman of exceptional beauty in the act of taking her bath. He had not, like Job, "made a covenant with his eyes." He gazed upon her first with admiration, then with longing and then with lustful intent.

He made inquiry and found that she was the wife of one of his own soldiers then at the front fighting valiantly in defense of his country. This alone should have made the king pause in his guilty intent. But he brought the woman to his house. He used his royal influence to break down any objections she may have interposed as defenses to her honor. He who was set for the maintenance of order and the defense of the homes of all his people, broke the law of the land and the law of God.

He vainly sought to cover up the consequences of his evil deed by sending to the front for Uriah, the woman's husband, to return home. But this soldierly man will not allow himself the comforts of his home while his companions in arms are

encamped at the front. He sleeps in his uniform in front of the king's palace and then returns to the field.

The king thus foiled in his treacherous purpose gives directions which would lead inevitably to the death of Uriah. He said to Joab, who was in command, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle and retire from him that he may be smitten and die." Joab executed his orders and presently this message came back to the king—"Thy servant Uriah is dead." David's answer to Joab was an ugly mixture of cruelty and duplicity—"Let not this thing displease thee for the sword devoureth one as well as another."

The way was now open for him to carry out the whole program which he had formed in the unhallowed desire of his heart. "When the wife of Uriah heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband. And when the mourning was passed"—I fear that in her state of mind it was not greatly prolonged—"David sent and fetched her to his house and she became his wife and bare him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord." This last sentence is a cloud in the sky, no larger than a man's hand, but out of it will come a storm of moral indignation to beat in pitiless fashion upon the head of this royal wrong-doer.

He had committed a horrible sin and his offense was aggravated by the fact that he was the head of the nation. He had been signally honored and blessed of God in being brought from the sheepfold to replace the unfaithful Saul. He was officially charged with the responsibility of protecting the homes and all the interests of his people—not for the destruction of those sacred interests by his own guilty action. He had made noble professions of his religious zeal, bringing up the ark to Jerusalem and announcing his intention of housing it in a worthy temple of worship. He stood in a special relation

of trust toward the families of those brave soldiers who were away fighting the battles of their country. He had reached that maturity when a fine measure of self-control and of sacred regard for the honor of others might justly be expected.

"The thing that David had done displeased the Lord . . . and the Lord sent Nathan to David." The Lord's messengers usually arrive on time. When Aaron had the foolish people dancing before the golden calf, Moses came down the mountain side, saying, "What did this people unto thee that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?" When Ahab was ready to enter on his possession of Naboth's vineyard, which he had secured by having the owner put to death on a false charge, Elijah, the man of God, was standing there at the gate, saying, "I have found thee because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord." When Peter lied for the third time, Jesus turned and looked at him until he broke down "and wept bitterly."

Here also comes Nathan the prophet to rebuke David the king! It is a great testimony not only to the moral courage of the man but to the esteem in which the true prophet was held in Israel that Nathan dared to do it—and still more that he could do it and not lose his head. It augurs well for the development of a system of appraisement and of a set of qualities in which all the nations of the earth could be blessed.

Nathan was an Oriental and he put his message of reproof in the form of a parable. How simply but graphically he pictured the cruelty and meanness of all evil-doing! "There were two men in a city, one rich, the other poor. The rich man had exceedingly many flocks and herds; the poor man had only a single ewe lamb which he had nourished. It had grown up with him and his children, eating of his morsel, drinking of his cup, lying in his bosom as if it had been his child. There

came a traveler to the rich man and he spared to take of his own flock to dress for the traveler—he took the poor man's lamb and dressed it for the man who was come to him."

It was a nasty thing to do, as any one can see. "David's anger was greatly kindled against the man. He said to Nathan, As the Lord liveth the man that hath done this thing shall surely die." Then the bold prophet bravely said, "Thou art the man."

This was precisely what David the king had done. He had been guilty of cold-blooded cruelty and meanness. Now by the searching words of this faithful prophet of God he is made to face the moral quality of his action. This was preaching with an edge on it and it brought conviction of sin.

The judgments which the prophet pronounced upon this crime were fearful and fearfully were they accomplished. "The sword shall never depart from thy house, and I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house." The child born of that guilty relation speedily died. Amnon, the king's own son, committed a foul crime against his half-sister Tamar and was thereupon slain by her brother! Absalom organized a rebellion against his father's rule and then entering the women's apartments in the royal household dishonored the king in the eyes of all Israel. It is a terrible story which we read in the succeeding chapters. The thing that David had done displeased the Lord and the judgments pronounced against him by this stern prophet were made flesh dwelling with the king in his own house full of pain and shame.

How often by the march of events is the punishment made to fit the crime! Lot chose the worldly pleasures and material advantages of Sodom and then in the wreck and ruin of that fated city he and his family were overwhelmed! Jacob deceived his aged father by a clever trick and was in turn cruelly deceived by his own sons when they brought him Joseph's

coat, now bloodied and torn. Here David robbed Uriah of his wife and caused him to be slain with the sword and in turn he was dishonored in his own household and the sword did not depart from his house. How each man's sin finds him out and works upon him its own direful results because we live in the grip of a great moral order.

When Nathan had uttered his telling parable, "David's anger was greatly kindled." He promptly voiced his own moral condemnation in his ready censure of this other rich man who had robbed the poor man of his one ewe lamb. "He shall surely die." How easy it is to be severe upon the sins of others and then to be wickedly indulgent toward our own misdeeds! First cast the beam out of thine own eye, then thou shalt see clearly to remove the mote from thy brother's eye. If any man be overtaken in a fault, ye who are spiritual restore such an one—and do it in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted.

We are told elsewhere in the Bible that "David was a man after God's own heart." The statement has puzzled many an honest soul. He was far from being a saint. He fell on this occasion into the grossest sort of wrong-doing. He was nevertheless a man after God's own heart in that he hungered after righteousness and his soul was athirst for the living God.

When he failed he faced the fact with no evasions or excuses on his lips. He knelt there in the dust, confessing his sins. "Have mercy upon me, O God. Blot out my transgressions. Create in me a clean heart. Renew within me a right spirit." Whether or no this psalm in its present form can be credited to David, that was his mood.

When he fell down morally he got up again, faced toward the Lord and not away from him. When he made a moral lapse he got up again, faced toward righteousness and not toward a further advance in wrong-doing. And that disposi-

tion is a thing after God's own heart. "The wise make of their failures ladders to climb up toward heaven—the foolish make of them graves wherein they bury all their highest hopes."

Here, then, is the lesson of this shameful occurrence in the life of Israel's great king—Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation. Ye know not what an hour may bring forth in the way of an unexpected and perilous situation, with its clear opportunity for evil-doing. You may walk at nightfall on the housetop and have your eyes and your interest deflected from the stars of heaven to that which will prove your moral undoing. When you think you stand, take heed lest you fall.

Chapter IX

THE TRAGIC END OF A PRINCE

2 Samuel 18

Here is a sorry picture of the abuse of high privilege! Absalom was the son of the king. He was a handsome fellow—"In all Israel there was none so much to be praised as Absalom for his beauty." He had a way of impressing the popular imagination in his public appearances—"Absalom prepared him a chariot and horses and fifty men to run before him." He was simple, affable, democratic in manner—"When any man came nigh to do him obeisance he put forth his hand and took hold of him and kissed him." This ready affability was most engaging.

But he was a disloyal, rebellious son. In his father's kingdom he sowed the seeds of discontent with both hands. "When any man had a suit which should come to the king for judgment, Absalom called unto him: Thy matters are good and right, but there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee. Oh, that I were made judge in the land!" The impatience of litigants is proverbial and the disaffection in their hearts owing to delay occasioned by the illness of the king was good soil for the seeds of rebellion.

We can see what a lying, thievish performance it was. His gracious manner clothed a cruel, treacherous heart. His showy courtesy was a tool employed to win a following for selfish ends. His apparently eager interest in those who suffered delays in the courts masked a hollow heart indifferent to all else save his own ambition to sit upon the throne. The

author of the narrative adds it all up thus: "So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel."

The prostitution of rare gifts to unworthy uses, whether of personal appearance and gracious manner, of high social standing and wide acquaintance, or of exceptional mental and moral endowments, is always tragic. The farther the life falls in its descent from possible honor and achievement to the unworthy indulgence of low aims, the more terrible the sight!

Absalom added to his sin of falsity in winning the favor of the people the blacker sin of religious hypocrisy. He knew the piety of his father's heart. He had not thus far given that father much comfort in his own attitude toward those spiritual verities which had large place in the king's life. But now Absalom announces that he has made a religous vow which he must pay at Hebron. And then, ostensibly to make this devout pilgrimage to Hebron to fulfill his vow, he goes to his father's ancient capital to further the interests of the political rebellion he had incited.

Alas! for those who borrow the livery of heaven to serve the devil in. "Betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" Would you use the symbol of affection as an instrument of treachery and hate? There is more hope for the open, high-handed criminal than for those who practice moral shuffling.

When Charles II. took the "Covenant" insincerely to enlist the support of the Scots the condemnation of the world upon him was more relentless than upon his open acts of wickedness. When the French monarch, devoid of personal religious conviction or sentiment, ostentatiously received the rites of the Roman Church, asserting in cynical fashion that "Paris is worth a mass," his deed was held in more abhorrence than his open acts of immorality.

But that which most touches the human heart in all ages is the cruelty and falsity of his attitude toward his devoted

father. Here was the blackest sort of ingratitude and treachery toward one who had been almost extravagant in his affection for this handsome, wayward son. "Honor thy father and thy mother." It is the first command with promise, for the foundation of the whole moral order lies in the sweet sanctities of the home. The rightly constituted home is meant to be a finite copy of the Eternal Moral Order, a miniature of the truth and love of Him "from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named."

For a time the rebellion of this young prince was successful. There came a messenger to the king, saying, "The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom." The king was driven from his own capital in painful, perilous flight.

But the success of the movement was short-lived. Here in the lesson we find the sturdy Joab setting the king's forces in what proved to be victorious battle array. "David sent forth the people, a third part under Joab, and a third part under Abishai, and a third part under Ittai the Gittite." The military instinct and the long experience of the king enabled him to post his men in such a way as to insure success.

Then the king partly to inspire his troops with zeal and partly from a merciful purpose cherished toward this rebellious son who would fall into the hands of his victorious army, announced his intention of taking the field in person. "The king said, I will surely go forth with you myself." But the people remonstrated. "Thou shalt not go forth. If we flee away, they will not care for us. Neither if half of us die will they care for us. But thou art worth ten thousand of us—therefore it is better that thou be ready to succor us out of the city."

The king acceded to their wish—"What seemeth to you best will I do"—but he gave them this final charge: "Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom." His

heart pleaded against his judgment as to what might be best for the kingdom in dealing with this dangerous young rebel. David was a father first and a king afterward—and fathers, thank God, love us even when we show ourselves unworthy of their love. Deal gently with the young man—not because he deserves such affectionate consideration but because he needs it.

When the battle was joined the able generals and the experienced warriors of David were too much for the troops of the handsome young prince who plotted against the throne. The rebels were routed and "there was a great slaughter even twenty thousand men." The cowardly leader of the revolt, intent upon saving himself at any cost, abandoned his army and fleeing desperately on a mule plunged into the thicket. But his hair, kept long to minister to his vanity, proved his undoing. He was caught by his hair in one of the overhanging prickly oaks. Struggling to release himself his mule ran from under him, leaving him half suspended and helpless. Before he could extricate himself Joab ran upon him and pierced his heart with three darts "while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak." Then Joab's armor-bearers fell upon him and hacked the young prince to pieces with their swords.

The disobedience and treachery of this unnatural son mark him for reproach wherever his story is known. There is at this hour in the valley of Jehosaphat a monument known as "Absalom's Tomb." When travelers, Christian, Moslem or Jew, pass it, each one casts upon it another stone as an added expression of condemnation for this unfilial son.

"Honor thy father and thy mother!" This was the word of God at Sinai. This is the word of the human heart at its best in all times. The young man broke the first command with promise and it was not well with him nor were his days long in the land which the Lord his God had given him.

The heart of the father was overwhelmed when the news was brought. He interrupted the messenger who reported the victory of the king's troops with this eager inquiry, "Is it well with the young man, Absalom?" Then in delicate fashion the messenger breaks the news, saying sadly but gently, "May the enemies of my lord the King and all that rise up against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is."

The truth was out, and the king, heedless of the fact that the rebellion had been crushed and his kingdom saved from further attack, was prostrated by his sense of personal loss. The king was much moved and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept. "O my son Absalom," he cried, "my son, my son, would I had died for thee." What are military victories and political kingdoms now with his own son gone wrong and slain!

Here was a young man ruined by his own advantages! Had he been compelled to earn his own way he might have won out. Blessed be adversity, for unrelieved prosperity is often perilous to the interests of the soul! Absalom was handsome, causing him to be courted. He was the son of the king, giving him the advantage and the peril of high social position. He had engaging manners, enabling him to acquire rapidly an easy popularity. His head was turned by all this good fortune so that he looked habitually the wrong way.

The king mourned for his unworthy son, neglecting the affairs of state and forgetting the service of those who had put down the rebellion. Finally the sturdy Joab was moved to remonstrate. "Thou lovest them that hate thee and hatest them that love thee! Princes and servants are nought to thee for I perceive that if Absalom had lived and all we had died, it had pleased thee well. Now, therefore, arise and go forth and speak comfortably to thy servants." It was an honest summons, for personal affection must not obscure moral dis-

tinctions nor can personal loss excuse men from further service.

When John Bright's wife died he sat among the wrecks of his joyous anticipations feeling as if the world had come to an end. But Richard Cobden came as a trusted friend, making tender and sympathetic reference to the sore grief which had befallen his friend. Turning to leave, he added: "While you sit here in your personal sorrow, women and children are starving to death in England because of unjust laws. When the first shock of your sorrow has passed, come out again and join us and we will never cease our efforts till these corn laws are repealed." The invitation was presently accepted and the consciousness of useful service rendered in hearty sympathy for the pain of others brought a comfort which private brooding would never have realized.

Chapter X

SOLOMON ANOINTED KING

1 Kings 1

The book of Kings opens on a low moral level. We have here the repulsive picture of the decrepitude of a monarch. We are introduced into the plots of an Eastern harem. We see the jealousy and bitterness inevitable in a polygamous household. It is a long drop from the elevation where David moved serenely in the days of his early manhood to this sorry scene where the book begins.

"Now David was old and stricken in years"—he was barely seventy, but his mode of life in those later years had robbed him of his natural force. "They covered him with clothes but he got no heat."

Then follows the story of the secret plotting of the king's favorites regarding the succession. His oldest son Amnon had been killed by his brother. Absalom, stirring up a rebellion to gain the crown before his father was ready to relinquish it, had been slain by Joab. Adonijah stood next in the order of succession and we find him saying as he witnessed the feeble condition of his father, "I will be king; and he prepared him chariots and horsemen and fifty men to run after him."

Each claimant had his supporters. Joab, the trusted general who had efficiently commanded the king's forces for many years, sustained the claim of Adonijah. Bathsheba, the king's favorite wife, came forward with an effective plea on behalf of her son Solomon. She said to the king, "My lord, thou swearest by thy God unto thine handmaid saying, Assuredly

Solomon thy son shall reign after me and sit upon my throne. And now behold Adonijah reigneth." Her claims were further supported by the influence of Nathan the prophet, long a trusted adviser of the king, and by Zadok the priest.

The last days of this old man were not attended by that mellow evening light which comes at the end of a well-spent life. Goodness and mercy might have followed him all the days of his life. He might have been privileged to lie down in green pastures and to walk by the waters of quietness. But the thing that he had done when he allowed himself to be ruled by unholy desire displeased the Lord and the sword of punishment would not depart from his house. The word of the prophet who rebuked him for that evil-doing had been fearfully fulfilled.

He resolved to put an end to the strife within the royal palace. "Call Bathsheba," he said. When she stood before him he said: "As the Lord liveth Solomon thy son shall reign after me. He shall sit upon my throne." "Then Bathsheba bowed with her face to the earth and said, Let my lord King David live forever." They had introduced all the servility and adulation of an Oriental court. Then David said, "Call Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet." When these representatives of the religious forces of Israel stood before him he said: "Take Solomon my son and anoint him king over Israel. And blow ye with the trumpet and say, God save King Solomon."

His directions were carried out and Solomon was proclaimed king. Then "the days of David drew nigh that he should die. And he charged Solomon his son saying, I go the way of all the earth. Be thou strong and shew thyself a man! Keep the charge of the Lord thy God to walk in his ways. Keep his commandments that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest."

It was a bit of good counsel. The dying monarch could not have taken upon his lips words more fitting. But what a man is often speaks so loud that people cannot hear what he says. If David himself in those years when Solomon was growing up at his side had kept the Commandments (particularly the sixth and the seventh) his own example would have instructed Solomon in those lines of action which promise honor and advancement beyond all the precepts which his lips could frame.

But even his dying counsel to his son and successor upon the throne was marred by unseemly sentiments. Before he let his voice fall after uttering this wise injunction he went on in bitterness to pledge Solomon to destroy Joab who had served the king so faithfully in many a field of battle! The brave general had incurred the unreasoning enmity of his master and now David further stains his deathbed by cherishing the spirit of vengeance. He lays upon Solomon the obligation to slay the object of his dislike. With this word of hatred upon his lips he passed away. "David slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David."

Judge him not by Christian standards. Measure him not with those wise and humane Christian rulers who have shown us how the powers that be are indeed ordained of God to high ends. Measure him against the rulers of Egypt and Assyria, the Oriental monarchs in surrounding kingdoms with whom he shared some of the inevitable limitations belonging to an immature period of moral development.

Now Solomon is king in his stead and we are ushered into a new day. The rude beginnings of the kingdom under David are to be replaced by the splendor of Solomon's reign. "Solomon was a man of peace engaging in no wars of a serious nature during his long reign of forty years. He developed the laws and institutions of his kingdom far beyond the crude

structure in David's day. He was a ruler of remarkable enterprise in fostering trade and in establishing the reputation and influence of Israel among the nations. He was in these respects a genuinely constructive man, a great diplomat and a successful trader."

"Solomon in all his glory"—this was the phrase which became current in the speech of Israel. His name was a synonym for that golden age to which Israel looked back in days of adversity and oppression. We shall see the limitations of this outward and material glory in later chapters, but here we have brought before us what seemed to the men of that day the auspicious beginning of a new reign.

It was another mood which now sat upon the throne. With all his unruly passions David possessed a generous heart. He was indeed the servant of his people. He yearned to be their shepherd, leading them forth in green pastures and by still waters as he had led his sheep in the joyous days of his youth. But Solomon his son had not taken upon himself the form nor the mood of the servant. He preyed upon the people, taxing them grievously for the support of royal splendor and showy achievement. He showed more of the spirit of the wolf than of the shepherd.

Solomon fulfilled with terrible accuracy the mournful prediction uttered by the prophet of old when Israel clamored for a king. "This will be the manner of king that shall reign over you! He will take your sons and appoint them for his chariots and to be his horsemen. He will take your daughters to be confectioners, cooks and bakers. He will take your fields and your vineyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. He will take the tenth of your seed and give to his officers. Ye shall cry out in that day because of the king which ye shall have chosen and the Lord will not hear you."

"Solomon in all his glory!" He dazzled the eyes of the Queen of Sheba when she paid him a royal visit. He dazzled the eyes of the thoughtless in his own domain. But some one must pay the piper in these kingly displays. And when the people came to pay through the nose in taxes burdensome and oppressive beyond anything they had ever known, it raised again the question as to whether kings are worth what they cost. This showy ruler came to the throne untimely. "When Israel needed a Cromwell, she was forced to accept a Henry VIII."

In view of this changed spirit, now enthroned in Israel, we are not surprised that it was one of "the house and lineage of David" who said in the day of his power: "Ye know that among the Gentiles the great ones exercise lordship and dominion. It shall not be so among you. If any man would be great among you let him serve. The greatest of all is the servant of all." It was one who was called "the son of David" who thus made accurate appraisement of true greatness. His utterance was the culmination of the best that we find in the earlier king, who with all his faults was intent upon serving the interests of his people.

Solomon accepted the bloody commission given him by his father in executing vengeance upon Joab. The unfortunate man had taken sanctuary in a way respected even by the wild customs of that day, but Solomon had him torn from the horns of the altar and ruthlessly put to death.

In the same mood when Adonijah, who had been a rival aspirant for the crown, came to Bathsheba with the modest request that the fair young damsel who had ministered to David in his decrepitude should be given him to wife, Solomon suspected some secret ambition plotting against the security of his throne. In the spirit of vengeance which David had

breathed into him in the case of Joab, Solomon commanded that his brother Adonijah, who had borne himself loyally and lovingly toward the new monarch, be slain.

He is not beginning auspiciously. We can see already above the horizon a cloud much larger than a man's hand which may swell into an angry storm to break upon the head of this haughty ruler. When any ruler fails to keep God's commands and to walk in his ways, he will not prosper.

Chapter XI

SOLOMON CHOOSES WISDOM

1 Kings 3

Here is a young man ascending a throne—how will he bear himself? He was not compelled to win his success—it was given him by the favor of his father—how will he enter upon the enjoyment of it?

His initial acts seem to augur well for the prosperity of his reign. He celebrates his accession to the throne by religious observances at the leading sanctuary of his day. He goes to Gibeon, seven miles northwest of Jerusalem, and there has slaughtered a thousand beasts for a magnificent burnt offering. He invokes, according to the custom of his time, the divine favor upon his reign.

"And in Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night." There were three main lines of approach by which it was believed the Lord made known his will to men—by dreams, by Urim and Thummim and by the word of the prophet. Solomon made little or no use of the priestly mode of communication with the Unseen. He seems not to have availed himself of the counsel of God-fearing prophets as had David his father. On the two signal occasions when God is said to have communicated with him, Solomon dreamed.

"Ask what I shall give thee," God said to this man cast into a deep sleep. Solomon piously recounted the blessings vouchsafed to his father David. Then he voiced his own request: "O Lord, I am but a little child. I know not how to go out or come in. And thy servant is in the midst of a great people that

cannot be numbered for multitude. Give thy servant therefore an understanding heart."

We have here the customary language of Oriental compliment which runs readily into exaggeration. The "little child" who did not know enough to go out or come in was already old enough to have a son. And the people over whom he was to rule dwelt in a land about the size of the state of New Hampshire, so that the numbering of them was within the bounds of possibility. It was a way they had. This was the Oriental method of indicating that Solomon felt his own need of wisdom and at the inception of his reign the responsibilities seemed beyond his power of estimate.

"Give thy servant an understanding heart." Here is an earnest of the spirit that in later years would thus evaluate the objects of man's quest. "Wisdom is the principal thing. Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, for she is more precious than rubies. Therefore get wisdom and with all thy getting get understanding."

"And the speech pleased the Lord." God said, "Because thou hast not asked for thyself long life nor riches nor the life of thine enemies but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment, behold I have given unto thee a wise and understanding heart and I have also given thee what thou hast not asked, both riches and honor, so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee."

It sounds good and many an edifying lesson has been drawn from the modest example of this young ruler who rated a wise and understanding heart higher than long life and riches and victory over his foes. If this is to be the yardstick by which he measures desirable achievement, then Israel is to be congratulated upon his coming to the throne.

But we must judge this edifying request in the light of its setting. Study the action as well as the spoken petition of this

young ruler. "Our Lord has taught us that we should look twice before we decide that the man who has gone down to his house satisfied has also gone down justified from the place of prayer." There are actions which speak louder than prayers and they sometimes tell another story.

Here is a man who tells the Lord that he prefers wisdom to the lives of his enemies. But if you look closely you will see the blood of Adonijah, his own brother whom he had slain, not yet dry upon his hands. Look again and you will see that his garments are stained with the blood of Joab, the faithful old soldier, who had served Solomon's father on many a hard-fought field. This implacable son had dragged him from the horns of the altar where he had taken sanctuary and had him put to death. When a man's lips utter one sort of sentiment and his hands another, it is confusing.

Here is a man who tells the Lord that he prefers an understanding heart to all the riches of earth. Yet no king in the history of Israel so oppressed the people by grievous taxation to support the splendor of a dazzling court. And no king so outraged the sense of purity as did this monarch by an unseemly display of sensuality in the harem he maintained at Jerusalem.

There was a man in the New Testament who "answered right" when the Lord asked him how he read the conditions upon which a man might inherit eternal life. He answered right, but his practice was sadly at variance with his mental grasp of the essentials of salvation. When the Lord asked Solomon what he most desired at the beginning of his reign, he too "answered right," but somehow he failed to square his action with his answer.

His conception of wisdom as we learn from careful study of the "wisdom literature" of the Bible was faulty. The type of wisdom held in honor embodied shrewd observation, skill

in estimating the significance of passing events, useful discrimination in dealing with men, a full understanding of the weaknesses and foibles of human nature, a measured appreciation of the advantages to be gained by virtue where a man was not as they said "righteous overmuch" and a certain prudential regard for those moral qualities which promised a speedy return. This was "wisdom and understanding" rather than that finer type of insight held before the eyes of aspiration by later leaders of religious thought.

Behold "a greater than Solomon" is here! When he declares that truth which is to make men free, it is truth of a higher sort. His wisdom which is from above is pure and peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and of good fruits, without variance and without hypocrisy. It does not come forward with hands stained red in vengeance, prating of the superiority of knowledge to victory over one's foes. It does not showily exalt understanding above wealth and then enter upon an unparalleled quest for material splendor.

"Wisdom is the principal thing," but only when the wisdom in question shows its appropriate content. Let men grow wise in their hearts as these sources of impulse are possessed by noble sentiments and worthy purposes as well as in their heads! Let men become wise in their souls with some genuine grasp of the eternal verities as well as in their hands trained to clever tasks!

There are men who pray to be seen of men. They have their reward. They pray to be seen of men and they are seen of men. They get what they prayed for and there is nothing more coming to them. Here Solomon prayed for a certain type of mental and moral shrewdness and he had his reward. He got what he prayed for. The finer character values, the nobler policies for Israel which should contribute to her glory as a Messianic nation, the more thoughtful regard for the

deeper interests of that people he was commissioned to serve, these apparently were not within Solomon's horizon.

The sample of his insight which appears in the narrative immediately following the lesson of the day has this lower quality. Two disreputable women were disputing over the possession of a child, each one claiming it as her own. Solomon said, "Bring me a sword." When the sword was brought, he said, "Divide the child in two, and give half to one and half to the other." Then the heart of the mother to whom the child did truly belong spoke out. "Oh, my Lord, give her the living child and in no wise slay it." The other claimant in barbarous fashion said, "Divide it." Then the king knew to which woman the child belonged and he placed it in her arms.

Here we have knowledge of human nature! Here is some measure of insight into the ordinary workings of the human heart. But this action hardly reveals that quality of wisdom which would betoken a celestial origin or bear upon its face the divine credential. We may well believe that in the climax of Israel's religious development One will come vastly greater than Solomon in all his intellectual glory, able to make men wise unto salvation and lead them into life eternal.

"And Solomon awoke and behold it was a dream" sharing indeed in the limitations which so often attach to dreams! "And he came to Jerusalem and stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord and offered up burnt offerings and peace offerings and made a feast to all his servants." His appeal for wisdom began and ended in an elaboration of ritual and it was clothed upon with a dream.

This final statement has been regarded by Biblical scholars as an addition by a later hand. When Jerusalem had become the central sanctuary and all sacrifices offered elsewhere were esteemed irregular, some lover of good form thus undertook to relieve the great king from the odium of having given his

approval to nonconformist practice. If, indeed, he had offered sacrifice at "the high place" called Gibeon, he immediately atoned for this irregular action and set himself right by sacrificing at the proper place. If this be so, Solomon's apologist might well have allowed this slip in anise and cummin to pass, giving his attention meanwhile to the king's omissions in weightier matters of justice and mercy.

Chapter XII

SOLOMON DEDICATES THE TEMPLE

1 Kings 8

When Solomon built the temple there was a blending of filial feeling toward his father, who had given him the kingdom, and of reverential awe toward God, in whose name the structure was reared. "It was in the heart of David, my father, to build a house for the name of the Lord"—and now the son had carried out the unfulfilled desire of his honored father. "The Lord hath said that he would dwell in thick darkness. I have surely built thee a house of habitation, a place for thee to dwell in forever."

We may believe that David would have been the first to rejoice in the notable achievement of his son. Foiled in his own purpose to erect a permanent national sanctuary because his hands were stained with blood, he handed on his sacred intention as an heirloom of obligation to his illustrious son.

The nation lodged in stone its confidence that God was with them. Here was the palace of Solomon, the king, here was the house of Zadok, the priest, and here was "the house of God," for he too was resident among them. It was an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual experience of the helpful presence of the deity they worshiped.

The passage falls into three parts:

1. The account of the removal of the ark of the covenant to its new abode. While men had been dwelling in houses of cedar the ark had reposed in a tent. Now the slight put upon the deity who had brought them safely through the wilderness to

the land of promise was removed. A worthy temple stood ready to receive the ark, which was in the eyes of Israel the dwelling-place of their deity.

Solomon assembled the elders and the priests representing the national church to bring up the ark of the Lord and deposit it in the sanctuary he had reared. It was a great national observance of a day memorable in Israel's history. And when the ark was in place, "The priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord." The cloud which had been associated with the guiding presence of Yahweh when they wandered in the wilderness again appeared as a visible token that Yahweh approved of their action, and had taken up his abode in the new place of worship.

2. The oration and prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the temple. In this portion of the passage we find the point of view expressed in Deuteronomy. The king is the religious head of the nation, and as such takes charge of the religious ceremonies of dedication. Jerusalem has become the place where Jehovah places his name, and sacrifice is to be acceptably offered only "toward this place."

The main theological ideas expressed in the orations of the king are that the temple is the earthly dwelling-place of Jehovah; that Jehovah is the creator of the earth and a being whom the very heaven of heavens cannot contain; that the thick darkness in which he dwells indicates the mystery of his being. The whole address moves upon a high level of thought and feeling.

In his prayer of dedication the king touches the fundamental human needs. The temple is to stand as a visible embodiment of their confidence that God and man have to do with each other in all the essential interests of this earthly life. It is to

be a symbol and pledge of that intercourse between earth and heaven which would have unspeakable worth.

"When thy people have sinned against thee, if they turn again to thee and confess and make supplication in this house, then hear thou in heaven and forgive." The temple would stand with open doors, perpetually inviting that sense of moral failure and of personal alienation from God to come to the mercy seat and be healed. The guilty heart might find release, and the will gone lame be restored to vigor.

"When thy people be smitten before the enemy; if they turn to thee again and pray in this house, then hear thou in heaven and forgive and bring them again unto the land which thou gavest to their fathers." In times of national calamity, when the country found itself worsted by its enemies, this temple, erected to God as a place of prayer for all peoples, would stand as a court of last appeal. Here the nation in its hour of defeat might find comfort and cheer and, if its purposes were right, a great Ally. The political no less than the private interests of the people were objects of divine concern.

"When the heaven is shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned, if they pray toward this place and confess thy name and turn from their sin, then hear thou in heaven and forgive and send rain upon thy land." The Hebrews believed that the ground might be cursed for man's sin, and thus fail to make response to his appeal for bread. They believed that the natural order which enfolds us is in solemn league and covenant with the God of righteousness for moral ends. They were not expert in the science of agriculture, but they had a keen sense of the moral values at stake in these common activities. The temple would stand as a token of the fact that the Heavenly Father knows that men have need of food, raiment, shelter and the like—and it would give assurance that if

men seek first his favor and help the needed things will all be added.

Then the prayer of the king still further broadened the scope of its moral interest. "Moreover, concerning the stranger who is not of thy people, Israel, when he shall come out of a far country for thy name's sake and pray toward this house, then hear thou in heaven, thy dwelling-place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth unto thee for that all the peoples of the earth may know thy name." Here is the expression of that messianic hope that in Israel's spiritual development all the nations should be blessed. Here is one of the high places of moral vision from which the prophetic soul might see afar off the coming of One who would say in the day of his power, "Go ye, therefore, and disciple all nations, baptizing them into the Name and teaching them to observe whatsoever things I have commanded you."

The divine election of which Israel believed herself to be the subject was not an election to special privilege for its own sake. It was an election to service. "Thou didst separate them from among all the peoples of earth to be thine inheritance," to the end that in their religious contribution to the life of the race all the earth might be blessed. To them much had been given in high privilege; now of them will much be required in missionary endeavor. The whole prayer breathes a noble mood. It richly repays our study for its beauty of liturgical form and for the breadth of its moral interest.

3. Then followed the dedicatory sacrifices and the celebration of the annual religious festival. "The king and all Israel offered sacrifice before the Lord. And Solomon offered for the sacrifice of peace-offerings twenty-two thousand oxen and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the children of Israel dedicated the house of the Lord."

The movement of interest from the stately language and

exalted spirit of the dedicatory prayer to the scene of sacrifice seems to the modern mind a long step backward. "It is difficult to imagine a scene to our senses more revolting than the holocausts of a great Jewish festival. The temple must have been converted into one huge, abhorrent abbatoir, swimming with the blood of slaughtered victims and rendered repulsive by heaps of bloody skins and masses of offal. The smell of burning flesh, the swift putrescence caused by tropic heat, the unlovely accompaniment of swarms of flies and of priests with blood-drenched robes, would be inconceivably disagreeable to our western training."

The whole effect of such a scene upon our hearts would be anything but worshipful. Yet even here we have the earnest of a better day. "There was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone which Moses put there at Horeb." To the Hebrew "the holy land" was Palestine and "the holy city" Jerusalem. The holiest place in Jerusalem was the temple, and the most sacred thing in the temple was the ark of the covenant. When we reach that which was central and commanding in their religious interest we see enshrined the law of righteousness. "There was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone," holding before the eyes of the nation those principles of righteousness which to this hour lie at the foundation of all progress.

The dedication of a house of worship to the glory of God and to the service of man's higher life was a great hour in Israel's history. It is a great hour in the life of any community. "Many of us still associate with certain houses of worship some of the richest experiences of our lives. There little children dear to us were consecrated in baptism. There brides and bridegrooms have pledged their fealty. There our dead have been brought for the last sweet, sad words of comfort and committal. There we first confessed our faith in

Jesus Christ. There we have sat at his table, communing with him and with our fellow-believers through the medium of the broken bread and wine poured out in our behalf. As long as we nurture faith in our hearts we shall be impelled to embody it in stone and mortar, in glories of stained glass and in nicety of carving, all of which shall combine to convince the world of the reality of our faith."

Chapter XIII

THE VISIT OF THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

1 Kings 10

How deeply impressed were the people of Jerusalem by the visit of this ancient Queen! They looked out from the walls and saw her caravan of camels winding its way over the hills which encompass the city. She came in royal fashion with "a very great train, with camels that bare spices and gold and precious stones." She came in Oriental fashion, bringing a present suitable in its magnificence for her to offer and suitable for King Solomon to receive.

When I rode from Jerusalem to Jericho some years ago I met the first caravan of camels I had ever seen. I counted them as they passed, fifty-three of them laden with bags of wheat from the rich harvest of the Jordan Valley. They moved in stately, leisurely style, their noses in the air with that supercilious look characteristic of them. And how much more impressive must have been the longer caravan of this ancient queen with her hundreds of gayly caparisoned camels winding its way up to the city of David.

The fame of Solomon had traveled far. It had reached the kingdom of Sheba, a commercial country lying in the south-west of Arabia. Now the queen of that land, moved by a desire called "curiosity" in women and "the spirit of inquiry" when manifested by the sterner sex, made her long journey to see the magnificence of this Hebrew king and to test his wisdom "with hard questions."

The narrative brings out the fact that she came most of all

to meet the man himself. She was drawn from afar not by the greatness of Solomon's kingdom, for his domain at best was small. She came not moved by an interest in the commerce of his land because his foreign trade (though deemed considerable by a people hitherto pastoral in their habits) was unimportant. She came not primarily to behold the buildings he had reared, for the modest structures at Jerusalem even when Solomon's love of grandeur had found expression in the Temple and in his royal palace were as nothing to the mighty structures of Egypt and Babylon. She came to see the man whose wisdom was his glory.

The ultimate reality in the universe is conscious personality. And the only proper evaluation estimates achievement in terms of personality. A man is great, not by reason of the military successes he has achieved nor by the wealth he has accumulated, nor by the magnificence of the buildings he has reared, nor by the host of toilers whose service he can command. A man is great in the last analysis only by the qualities of mind and heart he can show, by the good he has done and by the character he has won. The Queen was wise in fixing her main interest upon personality.

How deeply impressed was the Queen by what she saw! "When she had seen the house that he had built and the meat of his table, the sitting of his servants and the attendance of his ministers, the ascent by which he went up to the house of the Lord and the wisdom he displayed in answering her questions," we read that "there was no more spirit in her." The same word in Hebrew is used for "spirit" and for "breath"—we have here the exact equivalent of our colloquial expression, "It took away her breath."

"It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thine acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not until I came and mine eyes had seen. Behold the half was not told me.

Thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the report which I had heard. Happy are the men who stand continually before thee and hear thy wisdom."

The Scripture narrative of this famous visit is characterized by the spirit of seriousness and reserve after the manner of the Bible. But tradition has added to this modest recital until among the Arabs we find a wealth of detail touching the interview between Solomon and the Queen. The current idea of wisdom had reference mainly to wit, shrewdness and sagacity in answering puzzling questions or in meeting awkward situations. It is said that the Queen challenged Solomon to fill a goblet with water that had not come from the clouds above nor from the earth beneath. He immediately ordered one of his courtiers to ride a horse swiftly to and fro in front of the palace and when the flanks of the steed were dripping with sweat Solomon filled the goblet and held it before the Queen.

She placed bouquets of real and artificial flowers across the room from the King and challenged him to detect the real blossoms by sight alone. He at once ordered an attendant to open the windows and when the bees and the butterflies settled upon the bouquets he at once detected the real.

The Queen introduced a company of boys and girls dressed exactly alike and challenged him to discriminate the sexes. He commanded water to be brought that they might wash their hands. And when he saw some of them carefully washing the forearm as well as the hand, he designated them as the girls of the group.

The Queen produced a piece of onyx with a crooked perforation through it and challenged the king to thread it. He brought a silk worm and allowed it to crawl through the hole in the onyx, carrying with it its own tiny thread. The Queen had communed with him of all that was in her heart in the

shape of hard questions and Solomon had solved her every problem.

We have here the language of legend rather than the sober statements of holy writ. When we read on in this passage and are told how "Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom, that all of his drinking vessels were of gold and all the vessels of the house of pure gold—none were of silver, for it was accounted nothing in the days of Solomon; that the King made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones and cedars as the sycamore trees that are in the lowlands for abundance," we breathe again the atmosphere of the "Arabian Nights."

It is said also that the Queen plied Solomon with riddles after the custom of the East, and there are those who find in the last chapters of the book of Proverbs the King's answers preserved to this day. She is said to have asked him, "What four things are too wonderful for human understanding?" And he shrewdly replied, "The way of an eagle in the air, the way of a ship in the midst of the sea, the way of a serpent on a rock and the way of a man with a maid."

He was wise after his kind, but it was not the loftiest kind of knowledge. "A greater than Solomon" has been here and in the presence of the nobler wisdom of the Sermon on the Mount the shrewd counsels of moral expediency contained in the book of Proverbs shrink into insignificance. The One greater than Solomon has been here saying without fear of contradiction, "I am the way and the truth and the life," and before his loftier teaching the prudential considerations urged by the wise man of old have little power to engage the mind or to move the heart.

King Solomon's wit and shrewdness did not enable him to shape his policies or to direct the life of his kingdom in such fashion as to make for stability. His great buildings which

so impressed the susceptible heart of this Southern Queen financially embarrassed his kingdom. He borrowed money in huge sums from his neighbor, Hiram of Tyre, and when the day of payment came was compelled to cede twenty cities to discharge the debt.

His palatial residence, the meat of his table and the retinue of servants flattered his pride and took away the breath of this enthusiastic visitant. But involving as they did a burdensome taxation and an oppressive system of forced labor, they undermined his power and paved the way for that swift disaster which overtook his kingdom at his death.

He was more witty than wise. His foreign alliances through marriage with strange princesses, his exhausting magnificence, his showy patronage of foreign art, his autocracy in the use of slave labor and his own easy morals, together with that policy of religious syncretism which welcomed a host of strange gods and alien religious cults in the city where the God of his fathers had placed his name, were all contrary to the genius of the Hebrew race. He was not giving aid and furtherance to that type of national development in which all the nations of the earth should be blessed. He prayed well at the dedication of the Temple, but he failed to set his face in that direction which promised help for the fulfillment of his great requests.

When the Queen of Sheba had finished her visit "she gave the King a hundred and twenty talents of gold and a very great store of spices and of precious stones." Her gift was costly, fragrant and beautiful. "And he gave to the Queen all her desire, whatever she asked, besides that which Solomon gave her of the royal bounty." The royal bounty was something which was "thrown in," not because the Queen needed it, but as an expression of his unmeasured generosity.

This was Solomon's way and it is the way of Him who is

King of kings. "What is the need of flowers?" Alexander McKenzie once asked. "God could have made a strong, honest earth which would take seed and return us a harvest without flowers. But when he had made the earth substantial he added flowers because he wished to give them and knew how happy we would be in seeing them blossom by the roadside. There is no need of birds. The world would go its way, the sun would rise, the seasons come and go, the forest trees reach up toward heaven without birds. But God made the useful things and then he filled the quiet woods with forms of beauty and changed silence into song." It is the Lord's way to give to those that obey him the things they have need of and then to add a splendid measure of his own royal bounty.

Chapter XIV

GOD'S CARE OF ELIJAH

1 Kings 17

The name of Elijah was made from two words, "Eli" meaning "My God," and "Jah" the short form of Jehovah. "My God is Jehovah"—the name suits him! It grew out of him like his shaggy beard, for he spent his life recalling the faithless people from the false worship of Baal to the true worship of Jehovah the living God.

He came from Gilead, which is bleak, bare, rocky, like Cape Ann. The scrawny cedar has to look twice in Gilead to find a place to grow. The soil and the climate affect the lives of men as they affect the lives of trees. This prophet of old was taught and molded by the desert and the sky through which God spoke to his inmost soul.

He has been called "the prophet of fire." The time demanded a red-hot man. The shameless sin of the people had to be burned out by fervent heat. His heart flamed with indignation in the presence of cruelty or vice. His first recorded word was a threat of coming drought as a punishment for evil-doing. His uttered rebukes scorched the guilty hearts of Ahab and his wicked queen when he opposed their wrong-doing. He won his victory over the priests of Baal at the top of Carmel when he called upon God to answer by fire. He left the world at last in a chariot of fire. His scorching, radical methods were imperative, for no soft-spoken, mild-mannered man could have won his way in the face of such flagrant, impudent wrong-doing.

"There is an old saying that night brings out the stars. It was night in Israel when Elijah appeared. The darkness had long been deepening. The Assyrians had been pushing their victorious armies farther into the South. This pressure from the North had drawn Israel closer to Phœnicia, her neighbor on the West. It was a day of compacts and alliances—nations leagued themselves together to withstand a common foe. When Ahab was a boy his father had married him to a Tyrian princess. It was a prudent thing to do and the politicians of Israel nodded their heads in glad approval. Phœnician ports were valuable to Hebrew merchants and whatever is good for trade is well-nigh certain to be accounted brilliant statesmanship."

But there was a big, nasty fly in this pot of Phœnician ointment. The foreign princess brought her foreign deity with her. She called upon her husband to build a temple to Baal in the valley of Samaria. She brought her heathen priests to maintain the religious cult to which she had been accustomed, for a princess must be accorded spiritual privileges of her own choosing. And before Israel knew it the nation had in its midst a full-fledged section of degrading paganism. The thoughtless were halting between two opinions, uncertain as to whether they should give their allegiance to Baal or to Jehovah.

Here was a field for a prophet of fire! He sternly denounced the king for his unfaithfulness to the God of his fathers. He foretold a drought sent by the God of harvests as a punishment for Israel's sin. "As the Lord liveth before whom I stand there shall not be dew nor rain for years." There was a certain poetic justice in it—the punishment fitted the crime. The heathen Baal had been held up as the god of fertility presiding over the productive and reproductive processes of nature—now let him show his hand if he be all that!

There fell upon Israel a withering rebuke—drought and famine overtook them in the very day when they had forsaken their altars to seek favor with this "god of fertility." It was taking the devil's club out of his own hand to beat him with.

The face of the country, lying directly under the rays of the sun and lacking its accustomed dew and rain, was scorched as if the divine wrath against the lustful, idolatrous practices of the people had fallen upon it as a consuming fire. The means of subsistence grew scarce and the outlook was full of menace.

But through it all we read of the tender, providential care of this prophet whose courage and fidelity had become essential to the furtherance of God's plan. The birds of the air and the warm sympathy of a woman's heart become the agents of the divine purpose in keeping Elijah alive until his work was done.

When famine fell upon the land according to his fateful word, Elijah hurried away to the brook Cherith. He hid himself from the wrath of the king among the fissures of the rocks. He had denounced the evil course taken by the people —he had foretold the disaster which was sure to come as a penalty for their sin. Now not the king alone but the people as well were in a mood to wreak their spite on him who had so faithfully painted the consequences of their own wrong-doing.

"I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there." The almoners of the divine bounty were those strange, wild birds which fly about that region. Shall we believe that Elijah killed and ate them in his sore want or that he claimed from them some of their prey as his own food? Or shall we follow those who make much of the resemblance of the Hebrew word for "ravens" to that for "Orebites" or "Arabs"? Were the agents of God's providential bounty the winged creatures of the sky or kindly humans who walked the earth?

The evidence is too scanty for any one to dogmatize. Whether we take the narrative as literal history or as a poetic statement, the lesson conveyed is that God, by methods of his own choosing from age to age, exercises his care over those who have made themselves the useful servants of his will until their work is done. In some sufficient way the simple wants of this rugged man were met that he might keep the faith and fight his good fight and finish his course.

But "it came to pass after a while that the brook dried up because there was no rain in the land." The prophet had to change his place of retreat. The time was not ripe for a return to his own country so he went to Zarephath, a Phœnician city, on the coast of the Mediterranean.

Here also the famine was grievous and at the gate of the city Elijah met a widow on her way, as it turned out, to gather a few sticks to cook her last morsel of food. He appealed to her for a bit of meat. She saw that he was an Israelite and adjuring him in the name of his own God she avowed her distress. "As Jehovah thy God liveth I have but a handful of meal and a little oil. I am gathering two sticks that I may dress it for me and my son that we may eat it and die." But though the woman faced starvation she was moved with compassion by the prophet's appeal and she divided with him her slender dole.

The Bible shows a fine breadth of view in recognizing goodness in unexpected quarters. The spies at Jericho found refuge and protection at the hands of heathen Rahab, who was a harlot. Boaz found a gentle, winsome goodness in Ruth, the Moabitess, which made her a worthy ancestress of the great David. Jesus in his picture of the final judgment recognizes the acceptable service rendered by those who had not realized the historic or theological source of the impulse which carried them in the way of life eternal. "Lord, when saw we thee,"

was their modest, puzzled reply to his words of gracious appreciation. Here the record shows a Phœnician woman dividing her last handful of food with a famishing stranger, not knowing where the next meal was to come from.

But the blessing of Almighty God rests upon uncalculating generosity. When men freely give, they freely receive. When believers accept that challenge of the Lord flung down on the last page of the Old Testament and bring their tithes into the storehouse, the windows of heaven are opened and from unexpected sources blessings fall in such measure that there is not room to receive them.

This heathen woman obeying the impulse of kindliness which comes from that Spirit who is not far from any one of us, Jew or Gentile, Christian or pagan, shared her slender resources with the needy servant of the Lord. And as a result we read that "she and he and her house did eat many days. The barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail according to the word of the Lord which he spake by Elijah."

The prophet continued in the house of his new-found friend. How good to see this fierce old warrior in the quiet of a home! How good to see him with the woman's child in his arms, carrying the boy up to his own room when the child was ill and praying over him until he recovered! Withdrawn from the presence of that evil which his soul hated with a hot and terrible hatred, his gentler side stands revealed.

We may believe that God had in mind the bringing out of this more sympathetic side of the prophet's nature in the experiences which befell him in his place of retreat. The Lord said, "Get thee hence and hide thyself by the brook Cherith." The prophet obeyed and in that place of refuge his wants were for a time graciously met. But after a while "the brook dried up." "God was teaching Elijah a lesson not out of a dry book," as Dean Hodges says, "but out of a dry brook."

The brook dries up and we begin to understand what other people suffer. The brook dries up and we enter more sympathetically into a sense of the world's pain. The brook dries up and in the unexpected kindness called out by our dire necessity we put a new evaluation upon the qualities of our fellow-beings. There is many a lesson to be learned by carefully scanning the lines of a dry brook.

Chapter XV

THE TRIAL BY FIRE

1 Kings 18

Here we are at the top of Mount Carmel! We have risen above the dead level of the commonplace. We face that which is striking and dramatic in God's dealing with men.

The prophet proposed this test for the rival claimants upon the people's allegiance. "Send and gather all Israel to Mount Carmel," he said. Bring "the prophets of Baal, four hundred and fifty." There in the presence of this company he cried, "How long go ye limping between the two sides!" He thinks of a man tottering first on one foot and then on the other, first in one direction, then through sheer feebleness in the other.

His phrase is a telling one. "How many people today go limping from side to side. When religion is popular, when a great evangelist is stirring the community, when a great calamity sobers the world, these people limp over to the side of God for a little while. When the religious atmosphere is cold, when Christianity is ridiculed, when worldliness and practical atheism are popular, they limp over to the side of the world. Thus they spend their lives limping back and forth between God and Baal."

The prophet called upon the people for that definite decision without which there can be nothing worthy of being called character. "If Jehovah be God, follow him. But if Baal, then follow him." "The people answered him not a word." Their reply to his fervent appeal was an empty silence. In the presence of this brave prophet of God they were afraid to

say, "Baal." In the face of the attitude shown by the king and queen they were afraid to say, "Jehovah." Silence is not always golden.

Then Elijah proposed that the rival claimants build altars, lay sacrifices thereon and call upon their respective deities to answer by fire. Let the God who answered by unmistakable facts, be proclaimed "God of Israel." The fairness of it was apparent and the people answered, "It is well spoken."

The contrast between the scenes at the two altars was striking. On one side four hundred and fifty priests of Baal—on the other Elijah standing alone. On one side the well-dressed objects of the royal favor—on the other the Tishbite, half naked, with a leather girdle about his loins. On one side the fat, sleek idolaters fed from Jezebel's table; on the other, Elijah claiming his scanty fare from the ravens, gaunt, thin, shaggy as a Nazarite.

But on one side there was nothing but an empty, useless idol to serve as the center of a misguided devotion, patronized though it was by an apostate king and queen. On the other side was the living God having at his command unseen legions of spiritual forces mightier by far than all the armies of earth. When you add in the things which were not seen by careless eyes, the situation wears another look.

The people gathered on the mountain side and sat through the livelong day with Oriental patience. The priests of Baal called with vehemence upon their god from morning until noon. They worked themselves into a frenzy like the whirling and howling dervishes of the East, frantically cutting themselves with knives until the blood gushed forth. They shrieked incessantly: "O Baal, hear us! O Baal, hear us!"

They carried forward this pathetic exhibition of a desperate earnestness until the time for the evening sacrifice. "But there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded."

In the hour of their failure Elijah taunted them in savage fashion. We rarely find sarcasm employed in Scripture—it is a kind of intellectual tabasco sauce to be used sparingly by wise reformers. "Cry louder," he said, though they were rending the sky with their screams. "Baal is a god," Elijah added with telling irony, "but he is either musing or he is gone aside or he is on a journey or peradventure he is asleep and must be awaked."

This was gall and wormwood to the disheartened priests. It was salt and vinegar for the sore places of their humiliation. It was a strange, wild scene, the false priests smeared with their own blood, rending the air with frenzied shouts, and imploring the empty idol to reveal a power which was not there. Their frantic endeavors availed nothing—the sun moved on its course until the day was done and their opportunity was gone.

The hour had come for Elijah to put to the test his claims on behalf of the living God. "Come near to me," he said, and the people drew up with eager attention. Then "he repaired the altar of Jehovah that was thrown down," taking twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes. His act was symbolic of the devotion of a united nation seeking the favor of the God of their fathers. It was as if an American in the darkest days of the Civil War had planted a flag beside his altar with its separate star for every state in the Union though some of them were in the act of falling away. Elijah had a vision of a reunited Israel calling upon the name of the God of Abraham.

He "cut the bullock in pieces and laid it on the wood." He drenched the altar with water that all chance of fraud might be removed. Then in the quiet of that evening hour as the solemn shadow of Carmel stretched across the plain of Esdraelon, he offered his fervent, effectual prayer. It was not

long—two breaths will hold it all—but it was mighty. Men are not heard for their much speaking. There was no rant, no leaping, no cutting himself with knives in an unnatural frenzy, but there was faith and hope and love. He was calm and confident, for he prayed to the living God.

"O Jehovah, God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God and that I am thy servant, and that I have done these things at thy word. Hear me, O Jehovah, that this people may know that thou art God and that thou hast turned their hearts back again."

"Then the fire of Jehovah fell," we read, "and consumed the burnt offering." "When the people saw it they fell on their faces. They cried, Jehovah, he is God, Jehovah, he is God." The God of Israel had answered by definite results, and the victory over an empty idolatry was complete. The multitude on the mountain side was lifted into a new consciousness of the reality of spiritual forces. Their shout of triumph, with its joyous note of a returning allegiance to the God of their fathers, echoed and re-echoed across the Plain of Esdraelon, which has witnessed so many notable victories of right over wrong. Then in solemn awe "they fell on their faces and worshiped God."

We sometimes hear men who are beating the air assert, "It does not matter what a man believes if he is only sincere." The priests of Baal were sincere but they failed because their faith did not correspond to the facts. There was no such god as Baal. There is no such god anywhere from whom blessings can be secured. They were praying to nothing and their whole faith was founded on falsity. There was sincerity enough, noise enough, leaping enough, earnestness enough, but "there was none to answer," for their belief was out of line with spiritual reality.

It is a mark of indolence to say that it does not matter what we believe if we are only sincere. It is for every serious nature to make it the business of his life to square his faith with the facts so that his belief shall point to spiritual reality as the needle to the pole. No other attitude can be acceptable to him who said: "I am the truth. And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

The further lesson here portrayed in dramatic fashion is that all claims must at last be brought to the test of accomplishment. There is no difference in belief worth talking about which does not make a difference when brought to the test of experience. The claims must vindicate themselves in the eyes of an onlooking multitude by producing moral renewal.

The scene on Carmel may be regarded as a poetic representation of the wider test that had been taking place in the lives of the respective adherents of Baal and Jehovah. It was no mere matter of names, four letters in one case and seven in the other. It was the more vital question as to the effect of Baal worship and of Jehovah worship on the life of the nation, on the personal characters of the people. In one case moral feebleness and corruption were the outcome of false worship, in the other moral health was the fruitage of the worship of the living God. Let the Lord who answers by these signs be God!

Let the same pragmatic test be applied today to rival claimants for our adherence. Let the religion which answers by renewed hearts, by loftier moral purpose, by increased spiritual vigor, by finer forms of usefulness stand supreme! Let paganism and infidelity cease plying us with cleverly devised theories —let them make a show of moral results consequent upon their interpretation of the supreme verities and then we shall have something to speak to and not a mere array of idle talk.

In the meantime let the religion which answers by Christian effort, which reaches out with the hospital, the school and the church into every nation under heaven and into all sections of human need, stand supreme until something better can dispute its claim.

Chapter XVI

THE MAN WHO WAS DISCOURAGED

1 Kings 19

Here was a strong, resolute man under the juniper tree—clear under. He sat there wishing that he were dead. He had become so petulant that his own mother would have been ashamed of him. "I have been very jealous for the Lord of Hosts. The children of Israel have forsaken his covenant, thrown down his altars and slain his prophets with the edge of the sword. And I, I only am left." I am the only good man alive and they seek my life to take it away. "It is enough," he cried. "Lord, take away my life."

There are some things to be said in mitigation. He was tired—he had just passed through that nervous strain on Carmel when single-handed and alone he won his victory over the priests of Baal. He was now in the trough of a profound physical reaction.

His life had been threatened by the wicked queen and he had fled a day's journey into the wilderness. He sat there alone, physically, mentally, morally depleted. His feet were swollen by his long journey and his head was swollen until he felt as if he were indeed the only good man left in the world. He needed something to reduce that swelling and take away the soreness induced by self-conceit. We can understand how a man in such a state might fling out his resentment.

How intensely human it all is! How many similar cases of discouragement you have encountered in your own experience! You may indeed have reached the point where you could have

furnished a good-sized case of discouragement on your own account. "It was all so unjust," you said. "I was so badly treated. The men I dealt with forsook their agreements, they threw down their obligations, they destroyed my happiness with the edge of the sword. What is the use? Is anything worth while? I only am left and I have had more than enough!"

How did the Lord deal with this discouraged man? First of all he fed him. The poor prophet was hungry for he had made his long journey on short rations. His pulse was feeble and his veins were scant of life through sheer depletion. The angel of the Lord said: "The journey is too great for thee. Arise and eat." And he shewed him "a cake baking on the coals and a cruse of water."

The noblest flights of moral purpose have their physical basis. They cannot safely ignore the ground they rest on. The Lord himself "knoweth our frame—he remembereth that we are dust." He has a sympathetic understanding of those problems which are created by tired muscles and overwrought nerves. If you listen closely you may hear him say to many a tired servant of his holy will: "The journey is too great for thee. Arise and eat and then lie down again." There are times when an appetizing meal is a better argument against despondency than many a sermon. "Come ye apart and rest awhile," the Master said to his fretted disciples, "for many were coming and going and there was scarcely time to eat."

Then the Lord told the discouraged prophet to lie down and get a good night's sleep. "Elijah did eat and drink and laid him down again." He giveth his loved ones sleep! "I will lay me down in peace and sleep for thou makest me to dwell in safety." First that which is natural, then that which is spiritual.

How different many a hard situation looks next morning!

When we come to cast out the devils of despondency, eight hours of sound sleep shall chase a thousand, and ten hours may put ten thousand to flight. The straightest road to a restored and effective consciousness lies oftentimes through a period of unconsciousness. When you are depressed and are tempted to do some reckless thing, sleep on it. The whole face of the situation may be changed by the light of a new day coming fresh from the hand of God.

Then the Lord brought the discouraged prophet into close contact with Nature in her varying moods. Elijah stood at the mouth of his cave watching a storm. He saw the whirlwind breaking in pieces the rocks before the Lord. He saw the fierce glare of the lightning and heard the crashes of thunder as if it had been the artillery of the Lord of Hosts. He felt the ground tremble under his feet shaken by a giant earthquake. His spirits rose with the storm. His voice regained its resonance amid the peals of thunder. His courage revived as he saw the lightning, symbolic of God's wrath against the forces of evil. The storm cleared the air—it also cleared the mind and cleansed the heart.

"Go forth under the open sky and list to Nature's teachings!" When one is fretted by the busy little ways of men, how it lifts him into another mood to rest his eyes upon the great outdoors! The broad sweep of the ocean or the stately ongoings of some majestic river, the murmur of the wind in the pines or the silent, radiant beauty of the stars—how good it is! We can watch the face of this man of old standing at the mouth of his cave in the mountains. We can see the wrinkles smoothed out of his tired soul by the patient ministry of God's outdoors.

Then the Lord assured him that there were a great many good people in the world—more than he dreamed. The Lord laid his broad, kind hand upon the swollen head of this dis-

couraged prophet who thought he was the only good man left, saying: "Why so hot, little man? I have left unto me in Israel seven thousand which have not bowed the knee unto Baal."

Here in the rocky fastnesses of Judah and yonder on the quiet farms of Samaria, over on the other side of the ridge and away in the back counties there were seven thousand moral reserves who had not been brought into action. They were not in evidence when Elijah won his dramatic victory over the priests of Baal at Carmel. But none the less they were there showing in the quiet daily round of duty their steadfast loyalty to the God of righteousness.

His life had not been such a failure as he imagined when he sat there under the juniper tree wishing that he were dead. His word of appeal had not returned to him void. His spiritual leadership in Israel had not been fruitless. He had been sowing seed which had grown day and night, he knew not how, until on many a field there was a glorious harvest of faithful, upright living. The Lord had whole regiments of good men in waiting.

What a lesson for us all! What a healing remedy for that discouragement when we are tempted to feel that the cause of God is lost! We have been judging the world too much by those dramatic occurrences which command headlines and red ink in the daily papers, overlooking the vaster significance of those quieter ministries which go toward the rearing up of seven thousand here and seven thousand there, unnamed and unnoticed people, who stand to their duties without flinching. Heaven be praised for the moral reserves steadily carrying forward the battle for righteousness! They are the hope of the future.

And once more the Lord gave this discouraged man a definite bit of work. "What doest thou here, Elijah?" He was not doing anything. He was sitting under a tree wishing

that he were dead. No wonder he was blue! Let any man sit around doing nothing, reflecting upon how badly he has been used, studying carefully the actions of the men who are forsaking the covenant of the Lord, and his spirits will be dyed a deep navy blue!

"What doest thou here? Go thy way to Damascus! Anoint Hazael to be king over Syria. Anoint Jehu to be king over Israel." He was to take once more an active part in the political life of his country. He was to aid in securing good rulers.

Furthermore, he was to have a part in the training of religious leaders. "Anoint Elisha to be prophet in thy stead." He was growing old and he must have in preparation some suitable successor. He was to take that promising young fellow plowing his father's farm in a quiet valley of Palestine and train him up for spiritual leadership. In the face of this demand for action the unhappy prophet under the juniper tree had the good sense to get up, stop his whining, cast off his conceit and go to work.

Thank God for work! There are people who have too much of it and they work too hard, but their lot is Paradise itself compared with the purgatory of those who have nothing to do. Whether it is by silly choice or by hard compulsion, the people who have nothing to do are to be pitied. They are in peril now, and unless their sad lot is relieved they will be in misery ere long. It is not the curse of God, but the blessing of God that most of us are compelled to eat our bread by the sweat of brow or brain.

The problems of life are solved mainly not by those who sit under the trees mooning over the ills of existence—they are solved by those who eat and sleep, look up at the stars and down at the flowers, trust in God and in the goodness of their fellows, and steadily accomplish their appointed tasks. Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Bernard Shaw sitting comfort-

ably apart from the hard tasks of life become pessimists. But General Booth and Jerry McAuley, Jacob Riis and Jane Addams, living in the thick of it and laboring for its relief, have hearts of hope.

Here, then, is God's way of dealing with the discouraged! Food and rest and the outdoor world, the fellowship of those who are like-minded with us in their desire for righteousness and some definite bit of useful work to do! Here is a surer line of treatment for despondency than all the fancy methods of high-priced sanitariums.

Chapter XVII

THE SOCIAL MESSAGE OF THE PROPHET

1 Kings 21

The lesson opens with a clash of interest between a private citizen and the king. "It came to pass that Naboth had a vineyard hard by the palace." "And Ahab said to Naboth, Give me thy vineyard for a garden of herbs because it is near my house." "But Naboth said to Ahab, The Lord forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee." The king had broad and fertile acres in his possession, but his greedy heart coveted this added spot of beauty. On Naboth's part it was only a bit of sentiment which made him cling to that bit of ground which had come to him from his fathers, but it was a wholesome, useful sentiment which kings had best respect.

When Naboth thus refused, the little king was peeved. "Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth had spoken unto him. He laid him down upon his bed and turned away his face and would eat no bread." He was a man of small build, and the petty, childish humor now upon him was characteristic.

Then Jezebel, his wife, who was no weakling, ready to turn her face to the wall and weep over disappointment, comes to the front. "Why is thy spirit so sad?" she asks. When he tells her she promptly informs him that this is not the way things are done in Tyre, nor by kings generally. "Dost thou govern the kingdom of Israel? Rise and eat bread and let thine heart be merry. I will give thee the vineyard." She was

not a woman to "let I dare not wait upon I would." She was not "too full of the milk of human kindness to catch the nearest way." "I will give thee the vineyard," she said in her imperious way, and the king knew that the thing was as good as done.

But she will shew some bit of regard for the outward decencies. She decided to dress her wolfish deed in sheep's clothing. She wrote letters in the king's name to the elders in Naboth's city. She said, "Proclaim a fast." Ring the church bell! Put on a surplice! Say, "Lord, Lord," and sing the Long Meter Doxology through twice, for the queen is about to do an evil deed in the name of religion!

> "What damned error but some sober brow
> Will bless it and approve it with a text."

The wicked woman directed that a fast should be proclaimed and that Naboth should be given an exalted position among the people. Then two paid liars, sons of Belial, were to be suborned and made to swear that they had heard him curse God and the king. On this trumped-up charge of blasphemy and treason he was to be taken out and stoned to death. Then his property was to be confiscated by the state as the property of a man executed for treason and duly turned over to the crown.

What a lovely program for robbing an innocent man of his land and of his life! Jezebel was an artist in crime. If a man wants to do wrong, there is always some one to shew him the way. Eve will lead Adam to the tree of the forbidden fruit. Lady Macbeth will shew the Thane of Cawdor how to be king without waiting for the slow processes of nature to remove Duncan from the throne. The chief priests will shew Judas how to put money in his purse by an act of betrayal. And here is Jezebel pointing the nearest way into the coveted vineyard.

The program was carried through without a single hitch. It went as smoothly as a well-arranged church wedding rehearsed in advance. The story reads like the graphic account in next day's paper. "They proclaimed a fast and set Naboth on high. The men of Belial bare witness against him, saying, Naboth did curse God and the king. They carried him forth out of the city and stoned him that he died. They sent to Jezebel, saying, Naboth is dead. And Jezebel said to Ahab, Arise and take possession of the vineyard, for Naboth is dead."

Where there is a will there is a way! How smoothly these things can be arranged by royal edict! "What is the Constitution among friends" or the Ten Commandments or the whole Moral Order where we stand! Arise and take possession of all the good things your heart craves, for Naboth and all other obstacles have been put out of the way! This has been the method of selfish, cruel worldlings from the days of Jezebel to the present hour. God was not in all their thoughts.

What an hour for a prophet of righteousness! His work was cut out for him and lay ready to his hand. He knew that private citizens have rights which are not to be overridden by grasping kings or greedy queens. The prophet in Israel was the tribune of the people; he was the first great commoner proclaiming as a message from on high that "the welfare of the people is the highest law of the land."

"The dark deed had been done at night, but the king was alert with the morning light. He arose at dawn to seize the coveted vineyard. He rode from Samaria to Jezreel in military state, but his joy was short lived. News of his black crime had come to Elijah, probably in his lonely retreat in some cave at Carmel. He was instantly inspired to protest against the atrocious act of robbery and to denounce upon it an awful retribution. When the king drove up, there at the gate of Naboth's vineyard stood the swart figure of the prophet

in his hairy garb! We can imagine the revulsion of feeling which drove the blood to the king's heart. He felt that he had sinned in vain. The advantage of his crime was snatched from him at the instant of fruition. Half in anger, half in anguish, he cried out, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?"

Here was evil-doing facing righteousness, and it was ashamed and afraid! Here was guilt facing Conscience Incarnate and it shivered and trembled like a leaf before the wind! Here was the whole method of seeking pleasure in ways which God does not approve having the cup of joy dashed from its lips by the prophet of the Most High! He that sits in the heavens laughs at our puny efforts to outwit him and climb up some other way as thieves and robbers into the kingdom of joy.

What a dramatic scene it was! The king thought he was going down that morning to take possession of a lovely vineyard, and he heard his own death warrant read to him. He planned to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, but he met the day of judgment in the person of that prophet of God. Be sure your sin will find you out! God is not mocked! When a man sows, he reaps, and the harvest matches the seed put in the ground months, it may be years, before. We live not in a world of chance or of magic or of careless, endless good feeling, but in a world of law. Therefore let every man take heed how he lives!

Then follows the terrible denunciation which fell hot and scorching from the lips of this prophet of fire. "I have found thee because thou hast sold thyself to do evil. Behold the Lord will bring evil upon thee and sweep thee away. The Lord saw yesternight the blood of Naboth—where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth the dogs shall lick thine. And of Jezebel also spake the Lord saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the rampart of Jezreel."

It was a fearful threat and fearfully was it fulfilled. When we turn to the later history of this guilty king and queen recorded in the second book of Kings, we find the grewsome narrative which embodies the fulfillment of this dire prediction. When Jehu came to the throne this judgment was fulfilled against Ahab. And when Jehu drove up to the royal palace he ordered the eunuchs to throw Jezebel out of an upper window. They threw her down and her blood was sprinkled on his horses. And when he had eaten he said to his servants: "See now to this cursed woman and bury her, for she is a king's daughter. And they went to bury her, but they found no more of her than the skull and the feet and the palms of her hands." The dogs had eaten all the rest.

The prophet stood for the supremacy of the moral law. He believed that Mount Sinai was the highest peak on the surface of the globe. Kings might come and kings might go, but Sinai stood forever. Ahab had sinned against Naboth and he had sinned against the well-being of society in disregarding those principles of social justice which underlie all our advance. He had made himself the enemy of his race, therefore sharp-toothed dogs have their way with him.

The influence of this stern prophet of righteousness did not steal across the face of the land like a gentle evening zephyr. There are differences of administration under the same Lord. The still, small voice of persuasion and entreaty has its place in the moral economy of the world. And there are times when God speaks through the wind and the fire. There was a day when Jesus said, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." And there was another day when he said, "If any man will be my disciple let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."

The prophet of the Lord has today a great social opportunity. Let him make it plain that if any man stands for in-

dustrial methods which mean social injustice and public disorder, the holding of a sound theology and scrupulous attendance upon the sacraments of religion, his showy gifts to charity and the largest schemes of benevolence made possible by gains gotten in immoral ways will not avail. Let every man gain his vineyards by methods which are right in the sight of the Lord if he would avoid the fate of Ahab, king of Israel.

Chapter XVIII

FINISHING HIS COURSE

2 Kings 2

The story of the closing scene in the life of Elijah is not written in rhyme, but it is highly poetic. Here are the recurring stanzas marking the stages of his journey from this world into the Unseen. From Gilgal he moves to Bethel, entreating his young companion to remain behind. But Elisha protested, "As the Lord liveth I will not leave thee." From Bethel he goes to Jericho again, beseeching his friend to remain behind—"Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee, for the Lord hath sent me to Jericho." But again Elisha answers, "As the Lord liveth I will not leave thee." And from Jericho he goes to Jordan with the same oft-repeated refrain.

He is visiting the schools of the prophets. He will look in once more on the young men who are in training for spiritual leadership. At each of these several stages in his journey, "the sons of the prophets come near to Elisha and say, Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master this day?" And on each occasion the younger man replies, "Yea, I know—hold your peace." The literary method is that of poetic composition, and this fact may well be borne in mind when we study the narrative.

The older man had chosen the younger to be prophet in his room when he was gone. The death of Elijah had been anticipated apparently by Elisha, and this led to his steadfast insistence upon the privilege of accompanying him on this last journey. When the old man asked Elisha, "What shall I do

for thee before I shall be taken from thee?" the reply was, "Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me." He did not crave his fame or his place of power, but rather a fuller measure of that inner quality which made him a mighty prophet of the Lord.

How fitting where the energy and enthusiasm of unwearied youth invite from the ripened experience of maturer men the benediction of their influence! One of my friends was present many years ago in Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, when this occurred. It was in the days when Lyman Beecher had come to make his home with his illustrious son, and every Sunday he was in the pastor's pew enjoying the services in that great sanctuary. One morning Henry Ward Beecher was unfolding some aspect of the new theology as he had come to hold it, when suddenly up stood Lyman Beecher, saying, "Henry, may I say a word just there?" Beecher paused in his sermon and with a look of filial affection at once responded, "Certainly, Father, say on!" Then Lyman Beecher turned to the congregation and said: "Henry puts it this way. But it is not that way—it is *this* way"—and he proceeded to state the truth as he saw it. Henry Ward Beecher stood listening to his father with an expression on his face which blessed the listening, wondering congregation more than many a sermon. And when Lyman Beecher had concluded, he paid a lovely tribute to his father's influence upon his own life and then resumed his sermon where he had been interrupted.

God grant us a double portion of the spirit of these elder brothers who in the full maturity and mellow ripeness of their powers can bless us all. Let the freshmen and the sophomores receive a fresh anointing at the hands of the seniors in the great school of spiritual experience.

The benediction of this older man's influence was not confined to the single case of Elisha. There were fifty young

theologues who companied with him that day. When the two prophets went down through the Jericho valley toward the Jordan, "fifty young men of the sons of the prophets went and stood over against them afar off." It was somehow borne in upon them that this was a memorable day in Israel's history, and they longed to have some share in the high events of that hour.

Every young man needs the friendship of older men. And nine out of ten of those maturer men crave closer contact with the young fellows themselves if those chaps did not so often seem to shy off the moment an older man makes a move toward them. The professor at the head of the department where you are studying, the man of affairs at the head of the bank or the store where you work, the man of experience on your street whom you might know well if you only would—all of these men would rejoice in closer friendships with the young fellows who are still living in anticipation rather than in the realization of the great things of life. Draw up your chair, Elisha, for Elijah is in the mood for contacts highly rewarding!

The young man's prayer was granted—when the sons of the prophets saw him "they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha." The divine unction which had made the older man great in his office was handed on to his successor. There was the same Spirit, but a great diversity of operation. While "the succession was close and immediate, it was a succession not of likeness but of contrast. The whole appearance of Elisha revealed the difference. The very children laughed when they saw the smooth head of the new prophet going up the steep ascent where last they had seen the long, shaggy locks of the great and awful Elijah. "Go up, thou bald head," they cried. Elisha was not secluded in mountain fastnesses, but dwelt in his own house in the royal city or lingered within the sacred colleges among the sons of the prophets. His life

was not spent, like his predecessor's, in unavailing struggles, but in widespread successes. He was sought out not as the enemy, but as the friend and counselor of kings. His deeds were not of wild terror, but of gracious, soothing, homely beneficence. When his end comes he is not rapt away like Elijah, but buried with a splendid funeral, and a sumptuous tomb was shown in after days above his grave."

The death of Elijah, like that of Moses, was enveloped in mystery. Was this one reason why the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration believed that they saw Moses and Elijah communing with Jesus touching "the exodus," the going out he was to accomplish at Jerusalem? "Moses the servant of the Lord died in the land of Moab according to the word of the Lord, but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." "It came to pass that as they went on there appeared a chariot of fire and horses which parted them asunder, and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven, and Elisha saw him no more."

Now, as a plain matter of prose fact, what really happened? We read of a whirlwind and of "chariots of fire," vivid and fearful flashes of lightning, perhaps. We read also that there were those who believed that the body of Elijah had been blown over some cliff. "Behold now there be fifty strong men —let them go and seek thy master, lest peradventure the spirit of the Lord hath taken him up and cast him upon some mountain or into some valley. They sent therefore fifty men; and they sought three days, but found him not."

Are we to regard the narrative as literal history or as spiritual allegory, or as the account of some actual event clothed upon with those embellishments which seemed fitting to some highly-colored Oriental imagination? It would seem that the last view might come nearest the truth. This striking figure in the life of Israel, whose whole life had been dramatic, was in some mysterious fashion caught away in the midst of a

whirlwind with strange flashes of fire in the heavens. His body not being found by the subsequent search, there arose this account of his having been carried into heaven by chariots of fire.

His life as we find it narrated in these eight chapters readily lends itself to dramatic treatment, as Mendelssohn found when he composed his oratorio of "Elijah." And "from that time forward Elijah has taken his place in all Jewish and Mohammedan legends as the mysterious and deathless wanderer. Malachi spoke of him as destined to appear again to herald the coming of the Messiah. Jesus taught his disciples that John Baptist had come in the spirit and power of Elijah. In Jewish legend he often appears and disappears. A chair is set for him at the circumcision of every Jewish child. At the Paschal feast the door is set open for him to enter. Doubtful questions are left for decision until he comes again. To the Mohammedans he is known as the awful and wonder-working El Khudr."

How untimely would the death of many a good man seem did we not have faith in God and in a future life where those good men still work the works of him who sends them here and there to do his will! "When the Lord would take him up to heaven"—here lies the true interpretation of those sudden deaths which seem to us so tragic! It was our privilege to have as a guest in our home for the last two weeks before he was taken away Silvester Horne. He came to us fresh from his pulpit at Whitefield's and from his championship of the rights of the people in Parliament. Yesterday he was stirring the hearts of Yale men by his great lectures on preaching, and tomorrow he is caught away from the deck of a Toronto steamer into a world unseen. It seemed in that hour as if the whole English-speaking world was bereaved in the loss of a leader and a friend. But he was not dead. There as here he

is still pointing the way in that higher quest which leads to conquest.

This prophet of old, whose name was "Elijah the Tishbite," boxed the compass of spiritual experience. He waited upon the Lord for the renewal of his strength. He walked with sure and steadfast tread in the way of duty and did not faint. He ran before the king's chariot from Carmel to Jezreel upon the errands of his Lord without growing weary. Here, at the last, his spirit mounts up with wings like an eagle. He was not, for God took him.

Chapter XIX

THE MAN WITH A HANDICAP

2 Kings 5

"Now, Naaman, captain of the host, was a great man with his master, the king of Syria. He was honored because by him the Lord had given deliverance to Syria. He was also a mighty man of valor—but he was a leper." The last words strike an ugly, jarring note. They seem to destroy all the melody of those statements which went before.

Here was a man standing high in the favor of his king, honored by the people for his public service, in his personal make-up a mighty man of valor, but he was a leper and that spoiled it all. That is the lesson usually drawn from those words.

But let me turn that statement end for end—it can be done without violence to the meaning! Put the head of the verse over where the foot now is. Read it like this—Now Naaman was a leper, but in spite of that fact, he was a great man with his master, the king. He was held in highest honor by the people for the service he had rendered. He had the genius of a commander and was every inch a soldier—a kind of Kitchener of Khartoum on the roster of the Syrian army. He was a mighty man of valor, winning victories on the field of battle and in those harder fights which a man wages in the depths of his own soul. He was a leper, but he was all this in spite of his leprosy. His affliction then becomes the dark screen whereon these shining qualities of his life are effectively displayed.

"He was a leper"—you would rather be deaf or blind. You would rather lose an arm or a leg, or both arms and both legs, than to have a hideous thing like leprosy lurking in your blood. You would rather be poor—with health and a day what is poverty compared to leprosy! You would rather be ignorant —the world is full of books and teachers, and experience itself is a university conferring all manner of the highest degrees. Ignorance can be overcome if there is no enemy like leprosy gnawing at one's vitals. You can scarcely name a more serious handicap than Naaman's.

But his experience is in a sense representative. There is almost always some "out" about any situation. There is slag in everything—most everything. There are spots on the sun. The air we breathe and the water we drink bring oftentimes the germs of disease. The joy of winning an honorable success is tinged by the thought of the reduced vitality and the shortened life consequent upon the extra exertion. You can scarcely name a situation where there are not certain offsets to be reckoned against the satisfaction we might otherwise feel.

He was a leper. His friends did not know it as yet, for the scholars tell us that the word used indicates the white leprosy which works for a long time underneath the skin. He knew it—that was enough. His face went white as a sheet the day the Doctor told him what these symptoms meant. His heart sank like lead and he felt as if he might never smile again. You know all about it. The blow may have fallen on some other section of your life, but there came an hour when you, too, saw your hopes blasted as by the curse of God.

But note the high measure of honorable success achieved by this man, not because of, but in spite of his handicap. Naaman was a leper, but he had character and ability. The hand of disease had not touched these high qualities, and he so invested

them as to win the favor of the king. He had rendered a noble service to the nation, and the people would forever hold him in high esteem though he might die a thousand deaths from leprosy. He was a mighty man of valor, brave, patient, cheery—the hand of disease had not touched that, for it belonged in a world of imperishable values. He went right on, therefore, living his life and doing his work even though he was a leper.

How much of the world's best work has been done by men who were heavily handicapped! Milton was blind, yet in his day no man with eyes was able to see what he saw. No one of them could write "Paradise Lost" or "justify the ways of God to men" as he did. Abraham Lincoln was poor, homely, awkward, and he was only privileged to attend school for twelve months all put together in his whole life, yet he wrote his name above every other name in our American history. Charles Darwin was a lifelong invalid. For forty years he scarcely knew a day without pain, yet he did his work and wrote "The Origin of Species," ushering in a new era in scientific procedure.

Paul the Apostle had "a thorn in his flesh." No one knows the precise nature of it. Some scholars say it was partial blindness, some say epilepsy. One scholar maintained recently that it was chronic malaria—he may have lived at one time on the Ohio River. We do not know what it was, but it was a serious affliction of some sort. He besought the Lord thrice that it might be removed. It was not removed—it remained. His strength had to be wrought out under conditions which would have spelled weakness for many a man. His great work was accomplished with that thorn in the flesh jagging him at every step. How many men have to face the music played not as they would like to hear it, but with many a jarring discord! Yet they face it and march on, let the tune come as it will.

How much depends upon the placing of the accent when you say a thing or sing it or live it! You can say, if you choose, He had a great many blessings, *but he was a leper.* You can say, if you choose, He was a leper *nevertheless he achieved all this,* the more honor to him!

In Naaman's case the handicap was finally removed. By an act of obedient trust his malady was cured. He was told by the prophet to go down to the river Jordan and wash seven times. When he obeyed, "his flesh came again as the flesh of a little child."

It need not have been so—this is not necessary to the story. Had he died a leper the record would still have been that of a brave, noble and achieving man. In ordinary life the handicap is not always nor commonly removed. Many a man carries his load through to the end. The broken health is never replaced by the abounding vitality of earlier life. The crippled fortunes are never restored so that the man enjoys once more a shining prosperity. The disappointment in the home lies heavy upon the heart of that household until the last page of its earthly history is read.

In so far as Naaman's experience is outward and visible it cannot be repeated in the lives of all these burdened and broken lives. But in what this story symbolizes, in those values which are unseen and spiritual, the experience can be repeatedly endlessly.

Here is the great question, not as to whether you will escape from this handicap of yours, but how this disappointment will leave you? Will you come through worn and wrinkled, cross and crabbed in your inner life? Or will you come through that disappointment softened and refined, made tender and sympathetic toward the sufferings of others? Will you come out at last with the heart of a child?

There are thousands of people who have been burned to a

crisp by the fires of adversity which flamed along their paths. They are dry, harsh, repellent. There are other thousands who have been melted down by similar experiences into a more loving and more lovable quality of being. They have indeed become as little children entering the Kingdom to go no more out.

This finer form of achievement is made possible by these two factors: First, the law of compensation which operates on behalf of all those lives which are crippled in certain of their faculties. Helen Keller has not the power of sight nor of hearing. But her sense of touch is wonderful. The delicacy and the accuracy of it are marvelous. She can converse almost as rapidly as we do, simply by feeling the movements of another's hand in hers. Somehow the other faculties have a way of rising to meet the emergency. Under the extra pressure laid upon them by the handicap they develop a wonderful efficiency.

In the second place, the life made deeply conscious of its need is by that very fact thrown back the more completely upon the help of God. Our strength is made perfect in weakness because our sense of weakness brings us to our knees and to him. When I am weak, then may I be made strong in that finer form of strength which endures!

The life broken by cruel disappointment or affliction may allow the higher aspirations of the soul to droop and die. It may keep that sense of despondency alive by feeding it, coddling it, exercising it daily until it grows to be a fearful, unmanageable thing. It may begin to indulge in the luxury of despair, which is the costliest and most debilitating form of luxury known to idle souls. It may do all that—and that way ruin lies.

The broken life may, on the other hand, by the grace of God do this. It may turn that statement about Naaman end for

end and read it straight. He was a leper, but he was nevertheless a great man with the king, honored by the people and a brave, knightly soul in his own bearing.

This man with the handicap may read right on and say, before he lets his voice fall, "I, too, am broken in health, but I will show myself the master of my fate, the captain of my soul," facing the world in the mood of a man undaunted. I find myself with crippled resources, but I will show my friends that a man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things that he possesses. I have failed in my quest of domestic happiness, but I will make it clear that one's first business is not to be happy, but to be strong and true, patient and kindly, hopeful and helpful. Any disappointed life facing the future with that high resolve will reach some desired haven.

Chapter XX

THE BOY WHO WAS CROWNED KING

2 Kings 11

Here are all the materials for a dramatic story! How the author of "Treasure Island" and "Kidnapped" would have made these stirring events glisten with meaning had his mind been turned to this striking tale! How this Scripture narrative would arouse the hearts of a Sunday school could the swift march of events be brought before their eyes in a moving picture!

Here was the wicked Queen Athaliah, daughter after the flesh and after the spirit of the wicked old Jezebel! She was steeped in the spirit of heathenism and a perpetual menace to the religion of Jehovah. She established the worship of Baal in Jerusalem, "breaking up the house of God." In order to gain materials for her temple to Baal she "bestowed all the dedicated things of the house of Jehovah upon the Baalim." She was the Queen Mother and when her son, the reigning sovereign, was killed after a year's reign, she promptly slew all her grandchildren (as she supposed) and seized the throne herself.

She had energy and courage. No queen had ever reigned alone over Israel or over Judah. The life of the kingdom must have been at low ebb and the fierce strength of Athaliah truly commanding for her to have established this undreamt of precedent imposing upon the people of David for six years the rule of a woman and that woman a Phœnician idolatress.

Here was Lady Macbeth anticipated and outdone in cruel, selfish ambition!

Here also was Jehoida, the high priest! He was both priest and statesman, like Thomas à Becket, the famous Archbishop. But Jehoida was a man of good temper and of high principles. He and his wife took the little prince Joash (then only a year old) when the wicked queen was putting to death all heirs and aspirants to the throne. They secreted him in one of the chambers of the temple. Here they brought him up in the nurture of a pure faith and a right life until the time was ripe for his showing forth.

It was not the first time nor the last that the minister of God has proved himself well fitted to be the instructor of youth. From the days of Jehoida to the days of Thomas Arnold, Mark Hopkins and Timothy Dwight many a minister of religion has shown marked qualification for the training of young men "for the service of God and civil state."

Here was the little prince in seclusion unaware as yet of the duties and responsibilities awaiting him! But he was not allowed the care-free years which belong to an unclouded boyhood. At the age of seven he was summoned to stand forth as the rallying point of Israel's loyalty to better civic methods and to the worship of the true God.

Here also was a cleverly devised conspiracy and an effective *coup d'état* for the overthrow of the wicked queen mother and the enthroning of the rightful heir to the crown! The statesman-priest had to proceed with the greatest caution or his head would have been off in an hour. He began to sound the temple guards as to their feeling for Athaliah. He could count upon the Levites who were indignant over the intrusion of Baal worship. He won to his support "the captains of hundreds." He arranged to strike the decisive blow on the Sabbath at the time of changing the temple guards enabling

him to use those who were going off duty as well as those who were coming on wherever they were favorable to the cause of the boy king.

"At the fateful moment the guards were arranged in two dense lines. Additional solemnity was given to the occasion by the use of David's armor, which had been preserved as a sacred heritage. The guards were so placed as to form a hollow triangle, and into this space the boy prince was led by the high priest. The boy stood beside the Matsebah, a prominent pillar in the temple court, while the high priest placed the crown upon his head and poured upon him the anointing oil." Then all the people "clapped their hands and cried, Long live the king!"

The wicked queen heard the shouts and ran into the temple to see what was being done. She saw at a glance the significance of the scene. In the presence of that little grandson wearing the crown of his fathers, in the manifest loyalty of the temple guards and in the approving shout of the people, "Long live the king," she read the handwriting on the wall. Her selfish, cruel ambition was to go down to defeat. "Treason!" she cried. And she rent her clothes and ran toward a place of safety.

Then came the clear, cold command of the High Priest to the temple guards—it came like a clash of steel. "Have her forth between the ranks! Him that followeth her slay with the sword! Let her not be slain in the house of the Lord!" The stern order was obeyed. "They made way for her and she went by way of the horses' entry to the king's house; and there she was slain."

It was diamond cut diamond in those rough times. Killing was met with killing and treachery was outmatched by a more clever conspiracy. It was "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth and a life for a life." They had not reached the moral

level where reliance could be placed upon due process of law or upon the more humane methods of civic betterment. The Kingdom of God suffered violence and the violent served it by force.

The apostate queen was no more—a great rebuke had been given to all who encouraged Baal worship; the rightful heir to the throne had been preserved and crowned! The better day for the cause of morality and religion in the kingdom of Judah was dawning.

The main interest of the story centers in the boy who was crowned king. There is a certain pathos attaching to the lot of any man in high office whether he be president of a great republic or a king upon the throne of an empire. But what shall we say of that boy of seven "wearing upon his head the heavy gold crown and holding in his tiny hands the Book of the Covenant"?

"When the American Ambassador at Peking was presented to the late Empress, one of his aids described the scene—it was the first time that foreigners had been received at the Chinese court—and remarked that the thing which impressed him most was the forlorn figure of the boy Emperor as he sat at his mother's feet or was led about by the hand. The crushing fate of his later years seemed written on his brow as a boy."

But Joash may well stand as a type of the boy or the man who inherits, he scarce knows how, responsibilities which would have appalled him at the outset had he sensed them. When this boy king came to the throne "he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all his days wherein Jehoida the priest had instructed him, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem." In like manner because his heart is true many a boy has somehow risen to the occasion, his abilities adding cubits to his stature under the pressure of the unforeseen emergency, making him adequate to the duties imposed upon him.

And the high priest comes in for a generous share of our admiration. He took great risks not only to his own person in thus daring the cruelty of the wicked queen, but in placing himself in a position where his motives might have been impugned. Where a minister of religion or the instructor of youth thus conspires with the civil and military forces of this country to gain advancement for the young objects of his interest, there will be detractors ready to ascribe it to some selfish purpose. The man who would essay such a task as the one which this priest imposed upon himself must be great enough and good enough to incur that risk and allow his own worth to bear the added strain put upon it by such heroic action.

The training of a young prince is a sacred trust in view of the potentialities for good or for evil bound up with his unfolding life. And what shall we say of the training of the young in this land where every man is an uncrowned king? The ruling forces in the republic are not in the White House —they are in your house and in mine and in his. The government is not at Washington—the government is here and there and yonder wherever the people are. The rearing of all the boys and girls in a country where the will of the people is the law of the land becomes a sacred trust.

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." It is the underlying principle in all sound training here with us as in Judea of old. An honest reverence for God and a feeling of wholesome awe in the presence of moral obligation, these must of necessity take precedence over all other considerations in the development of that quality of mind and heart which will make a people competent to rule their land.

Chapter XXI

THE PERILS OF SUCCESS

2 Chron. 26

Here was a man who "arrived," as we say, in a very real and large way! He had been a boy of remarkable promise. When he was but sixteen years old he was crowned king, although he does not seem to have been the eldest son. But he was so able and so winsome that the popular will prevailed over the law of succession. "All the people of Judah took Uzziah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king."

"He reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem"—almost as long as Queen Victoria over the fortunes of the British Empire! His reign was not only long, it was great and good—"he did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord," and the natural reaction came in the confidence of his people and in the favor of his Maker.

His years were years of notable and worthy achievement. He broke the strength of Israel's enemies that she might have peace on all her borders. "He went forth and warred against the Philistines and broke down the wall of Gath (the home of Goliath who had once defied the armies of Israel) and the wall of Jabneh and the wall of Ashdod. He built cities in the country of Ashdod and among the Philistines." His foreign policy was so successful that "his name spread abroad even unto the entering in of Egypt, for he waxed exceeding strong."

He strengthened the defenses of his capital against hostile attack. "He built towers in Jerusalem at the corner gate and at the valley gate and at the turning of the wall and he fortified

them. He also built towers in the wilderness." He would make his capital and all his borders inviolable against those enemies which were a menace to the prosperity of Israel.

He was his own efficient Secretary of the Interior. He developed the resources of the land. He had in mind the interests of the stock raisers—"he hewed out many cisterns in the lowland and in the plain, for he had much cattle." He found happiness in the prosperity of his people and loved to see their sheep and their cattle on a thousand hills.

He was no less intent upon the welfare of the farmers and the fruit growers. "He had husbandmen and vinedressers in the mountains and on the fruitful fields, for he loved husbandry." He would have them realize to the full the promise made to their fathers of old in the wilderness. "The Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of the hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates; a land of olive oil and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness and not lack any good thing."

He also strengthened the army, for little Palestine was surrounded by marauders. "Uzziah had an army of fighting men that went out to war by bands. He prepared for them, even for all the host, spears and shields, helmets and coats of mail, bows and stones for slinging." He also provided according to the military methods of that day huge catapults for the defense of the city. "He made in Jerusalem engines invented by cunning men to be on the towers and on the battlements to shoot arrows and great stones. His fame spread far abroad, for he was marvellously helped."

What a splendid career! What a record of honorable achievement! "If any man would be great among you let him serve"—this man served the interests of his people. "The greatest of all is the servant of all"—this wise and good ruler

boxed the compass of essential interests and served well the people who lived under his rule. Surely we have here the materials out of which a serene old age may be formed so that the last days of this successful ruler may indeed be his best days.

But prosperity has its perils no less than adversity. If "the destruction of the poor is their poverty," the menace of the rich comes often from their abundance. "I know how to be abased"—this is a valuable lesson to be taken to heart. "I know also how to abound"—this lesson is perhaps even harder to master. The man who is instructed to be full and to be hungry and in whatsoever state he is therewith to be content is a well-rounded man.

"He was marvellously helped till he was strong. But when he was strong his heart was lifted up so that he did corruptly and trespassed against the Lord." In the very hour of his highest success "his heart was puffed up and he thrust himself into the priest's office to burn incense in the Temple. Solomon did the same thing without the least question of opposition, but times have changed and the high priest with eighty of his colleagues went in a body to rebuke Uzziah and to order him out of the Holy Place."

"The opposition kindled in him the fiercest anger and at this moment of hot altercation the red spot of leprosy suddenly burned upon his forehead. The priests looked with horror on the fatal sign, and the stricken king, himself terrified at this awful visitation of God, rushed forth to relieve the Temple of his unclean presence and to linger out the sad remnant of his days in the living death of that fearful disease. Surely no man was ever smitten down from the summits of splendor to a lower abyss of unspeakable calamity."

His leprosy came, as they believed, as a judgment of God upon his sacrilegious attempt to usurp the place of the priest

in burning incense in the Holy Place. The king's prerogatives were closely defined by law and custom. Woe to the ruler, therefore, who carelessly exceeded his rights! The priestly class felt a not unworthy jealousy touching the privileges of their holy office.

It was not all ignorant superstition. The priestly system was not ideal, but it had its uses. It was only the scaffolding by which men should climb as they wrought upon the true temple of God, but it aided them in developing the sense of reverence and the consciousness of the divine presence. And this contributed mightily to the working out of a redeemed humanity to serve as the veritable dwelling place of the divine honor.

The high prerogatives of spiritual leadership are meant to be sacredly guarded against political encroachment. "Had not the king yielded to base ambition, the protests of the eighty priests might have stayed him in his mad course, for the temple at this time had in its service reverent men familiar with the responsibilities of their office. Their quick and brave remonstrance betokened the possession of a spirit not unlike that which led Pope Hildebrand twenty centuries later to keep Henry IV. of Germany waiting for three days in the courtyard at Canossa before the royal penitent could receive absolution. The power of the keys in Jewish and in Christian history has been something that could not easily be ignored by corrupt earthly potentates. When used to curb the pride of designing monarchs who claim supremacy in every realm of life, this power of the keys exhibits itself historically in its best light."

Every period of life is beset by its own peculiar temptations. The sins of the temper and of the tongue do most beset the eager, thoughtless life of the boy. The sins of passion lie in wait for the young man with rich, red blood coursing madly through his veins. The man in middle life removed from the

visions and dreams of those earlier years, when ideals were more real than dollars, is prone to forget that man does not live by bread alone, but by all those great impulses which lie within the purpose of God. And when a man has achieved, his self-complacency and pride in his accomplishment may subtly undermine those finer qualities of reverence, of sympathy, of modesty which make for godly character.

The plainest and most ominous warnings in the teachings of Christ are not addressed to those who have failed, but to those who have succeeded. "He spake this parable to certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others." He said to a rich man whose big barns were bursting with goods, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the *things* that he possesseth. That night shall thy soul be required of thee, then whose shall those *things* be?" He said: "Woe unto you that are full! Woe unto you when all men speak well of you." He drew his picture of Dives in torment to show the perils of a showy, material success. He said bluntly, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God."

Be on your guard, then, against that self-satisfied spirit which does so easily clothe the successful life as with a garment. Have a care lest you undertake to live on past victories —the bread of heaven which feeds the soul must be gathered daily lest it spoil, for no man can live upon the manna he gathered in the days of the Civil War. When you are strong and glad in your prosperity, won, it may be, by your own right hand and clear head, then pray to God that you may not think of yourself more highly than you ought to think.

The wisdom of the Old *régime* and the wisest of the New unite in saying that "pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall, for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Chapter XXII

THE STORY OF A FAITHLESS KING

2 Chron. 28

Here is a sorry story of folly and wickedness! His head was empty though it wore a crown, and his heart was foul though he sat upon a throne. He inflicted upon his people sixteen years of inefficiency, cowardice and political corruption. "Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem and he did not that which was right in the eyes of the Lord."

The wicked kings come in for summary treatment at the hands of the author of these Chronicles. He was swift in his condemnation of any lack of fidelity to the prescribed worship of the state church. "Yet no king is raised to the 'bad eminence' of an evil counterpart to David. The story of Ahaz, for instance, is not given at the same length or with the same wealth of detail as that of David. The subject was not so congenial to the heart of the Chronicler. He was not imbued with the unhappy spirit of modern realism which loves to dwell on all that is foul and ghastly in life and character. He lingered affectionately over his heroes but contented himself with briefer notices of his villains."

This Ahaz was the grandson of the great king Uzziah who had reigned over the kingdom for fifty-two years and had served his people well. He was the son of Jotham who for twenty-five years had kept up the tradition of faithful, competent administration of his country's affairs. Now the young prince of twenty comes to the throne with that splendid back-

ground of public service and with that noble inheritance to furnish added impetus to his own efforts as a wise and good ruler.

But his heart was not right in the sight of God and the first moves he made were in the wrong direction. He felt that his ancestors had been a bit narrow perhaps in limiting their worship to Jehovah the God of the Hebrews. He proposed to branch out upon a more liberal religious policy. He would rear for himself in Jerusalem a little toy Pantheon where all the gods of those heathen neighbors whose good will he coveted might be made comfortably at home. "He made molten images for the Baalim. He burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom. He sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places and on the hills and under every green tree." And most horrible of all he stooped to the infamy of human sacrifices upon which the religion of the Hebrews had steadily frowned —"he burnt his children in the fire according to the abominations of the heathen whom the Lord cast out."

It was a grewsome record he wrote upon the clean white paper of his nation's life as it had been handed over to him by his honored predecessors on the throne. We are prepared in advance for the swift succession of divine judgments which fell upon him for his evil-doing.

> "When we in our wickedness grow hard,
> The wise gods seal our eyes;
> In our own filth drop our clear judgments;
> Make us adore our errors; laugh at us
> While we strut to our confusion."

When he had shown this black ingratitude to the God of his fathers who had set him upon his throne, "the Lord his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria who smote him and carried away of his a great multitude of captives and brought them to Damascus." Furthermore, the Lord raised

up trouble for him at his very door—"He was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel who smote him with a great slaughter, for Pekah, king of Israel, slew in Judah a hundred and twenty thousand, all valiant men, in one day, because they had forsaken the God of their fathers."

The disaster was widespread. "The Israelite army approached Samaria with their endless train of miserable captives, women and children, ragged and barefoot, some even naked, filthy and footsore with forced marches, hungry and thirsty with prisoners' scanty rations." They saw before them nothing but a life of degradation and drudgery in the land of their captors.

But suddenly all this was changed. There appeared upon the scene Oded, a prophet of the Lord. He warned the victorious armies of Israel against the sin of enslaving their unhappy fellows. "Are there not with you trespasses of your own against the Lord your God? Now therefore hear me and send back the captives which ye have taken captive of your brethren lest the fierce wrath of the Lord be upon you." And the rough soldiers gave heed to his appeal. "They took the captives and with the spoil clothed them that were naked among them and shod them and gave them to eat and to drink and carried all the feeble of them upon asses and brought them to Jericho, the city of palm trees, unto their brethren." It was a humane act and the author, himself belonging to the opposing nation, warmly applauds it.

The Lord was still merciful and gracious, slow to anger and of great mercy toward this faithless king who had involved his people in such disaster. There was still time and room and abundant occasion for repentance. But it was another case of pearls before swine. The divine goodness seemed to be thrown away upon Ahaz. He brought forth no "fruits

meet for repentance." He made no response to the divine overtures.

Then began the fall of further judgments upon him even as the rain descended, the winds blew and the floods beat upon the house built on the sands of disobedience until it fell. The Edomites came up and smote Judah and carried away captives. The Philistines invaded the cities of the lowland and the south country. And the guilty king in place of humbling himself before the God of his fathers sought now the help of the kings of Assyria only to experience again the disaster of those who take counsel with the wicked and lean for their support upon the broken reeds of moral treachery.

"Tilgath-Pilneser, king of Assyria, came unto him and distressed him but strengthened him not." Then Ahaz in his wicked desperation added to his idolatry, robbery, and to robbery profanation. "He took away a portion out of the house of the Lord. He gathered together the vessels of the house of God and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God. He shut up the doors of the house of the Lord and made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem. In every several city of Judah he made high places to burn incense to other gods and provoked to anger the God of his fathers." Truly whom the gods destroy, they first make mad.

By his restoration and extension of these foul and idolatrous cults he was rapidly making the nation apostate. He was lowering the moral tone of that people whose glory it had been to worship One God whose name was Holy. He was defeating the Messianic purpose in the calling of the Hebrews to be a people in whose life all the nations of the earth might be blessed.

We cannot always measure the strength and quality of a nation's religious life by the number and appointing of its churches. We cannot appraise its devotion by the orthodoxy

of its tenets or by the regularity of its ritual observances of worship. There are other and more reliable tests. But here at this period of the spiritual development of the race the matter of fidelity to the highest form of worship which the world knew and the maintenance of loyalty to those moral principles which had come to be associated with that worship were of prime importance.

"The most fatal symptoms of national depravity are the absence of a healthy public opinon, indifference to character in politics, neglect of moral education as a means of developing character, and the stifling of the spirit of brotherhood in a desperate struggle for existence. When God is thus forgotten and the gracious influences of his spirit are no longer recognized in public and private life, a country may well be degraded into the ranks of the wicked nations."

What a striking manifestation of the process of divine judgment has been witnessed in the moral outcome of the War! The will to power, the philosophy of brute force, the contempt for moral principle, has now been fully tried under more favorable conditions than ever before in the history of mankind. The German people were powerful, prosperous, intelligent, united, and they were prepared to the sewing on of the last button, yet the whole world knows today that they have miserably failed. He that sitteth in the heavens has laughed at their silly gospel of materialism with its open contempt for the spiritual values at stake.

Look at Germany in this hour of her humiliation! She has lost all her colonies. Her fleet has been turned over to the Allies. Her merchant marine, once the pride of the seven seas, is only an empty shell. Her world-wide commerce built up at such cost of money and effort is all gone. She has lost the good will of all the nations of earth. She has seen a million and a half of her strongest young men go under the sod and

another million and a half return to their homes weakened, maimed or blinded by the war. She has rolled up a national debt which renders her bankrupt—it is owed mainly to her own people, who are wondering if they will ever see anything of either principal or interest. She has been compelled to sign an armistice more severe and more humiliating than any ever imposed upon a powerful nation in all history. She will be compelled to pay a bill for damages which may easily amount to anything from thirty to sixty billions of dollars, and the armies of occupation are on her own soil to see that it is paid to the last pfennig. And worse than all else she has plunged herself into a depth of moral contempt from which she will not emerge in a hundred years.

"God is not mocked." Whatsoever a nation sows that must it also reap! The nation that sows to its flesh will of the flesh reap corruption. The Almighty does not settle his accounts at the end of each month, but nothing is overlooked, nothing is forgotten, and when the final reckoning is made up neither men nor nations come forth until they have paid the uttermost farthing. "He shall judge the nations in righteousness and shall break in pieces the oppressor. He shall have dominion from sea to sea and his enemies shall lick the dust. He shall redeem the souls of his servants from deceit and violence and precious shall their blood be in his sight." He has pronounced his own fearful judgment on the decay of a great national soul.

Have we any cause to look well to our own dooryards before we look with open-eyed contempt upon the broad acres of Ahaz's disobedience? We have not built altars to any Syrian Baal or burnt our children in frightful sacrifices to appease the wrath of some fearful heathen god. But have we in our prevailing moods and current practices been setting up in the place of God that which is far from being divine? Have we been inclined to make gold our hope and to say to huge bank

accounts, "Thou art our confidence"? Have we been tempted to rejoice because our wealth was great and because our right hands had gotten us much? Have we spelled "Efficiency" with a capital E and then exalted it into a kind of second-hand deity for our every-day worship?

Hear, O America, the Lord our God is One and thou shalt have no other god before him! And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy mind and with all thy might.

Chapter XXIII

THE STORY OF A FAITHFUL KING

2 Chron. 30

Here are two companion pictures to be hung, however, on the opposite sides of the room! In the last chapter we were looking upon the face of Ahaz, "The Faithless King." Today we turn in happier mood to Hezekiah, "The Faithful King." We may look in this direction or in that to be shown how to do it or how not to do it.

The king who looks down upon us from this passage came to the throne with youth and inexperience. He was the son of a ruler who had shown himself both feeble and faithless. He looked out upon a company of blind priests and designing politicians from whose ranks he must choose his advisers. He found the whole civic and religious life of his nation depleted and corrupted by the evil practices introduced by his wicked predecessor.

Yet in some way he carried out a reformation of morality and religion which went quite down to the roots of the matter. He was a ruler who ruled. "We may suspect that high influences like that of the prophet Isaiah may have reached him in his youth, but there must have been something immediate, direct, irresistible in a consciousness of God that could communicate itself to a whole people, a private conviction of his will that could become universal, purifying the life of all who made response and ushering in an era of gladness which remains forever associated in the memory of the nation with the name of Hezekiah."

He undertook to renew the sense of allegiance to Jehovah and of fellowship in a vast spiritual enterprise on the part of the people by a notable observance of the feast of the Passover. He would make it a great religious festival, national in its scope and significance. "Hezekiah sent letters to all Israel and Judah," thus ignoring the unhappy split which came in the life of the Hebrew nation when the ten tribes in the north carried through their Act of Secession. "He wrote that they should come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem to keep the Passover. So the posts went with the letters from the king and his princes throughout all Israel and Judah."

And with this royal summons to a religious festival in the ancient capital there went a gracious message. The king could not forget nor ignore the fact that there had been a falling away among the people and that thousands of them, if they were frankly honest with their own hearts, would esteem themselves unworthy to accept the summons. He bade them fix their eyes upon the God of grace in whose honor this festival was to be celebrated. Here are the words of his spiritual appeal: "Jehovah, your God is gracious and merciful and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return to him."

His appeal was effective and there came to Jerusalem a great concourse of people who had made the spiritual pilgrimage. It was as if some International Convention of Christian Endeavor had come from the north and the south, the east and the west and from lands beyond the seas, to share in the inspiration and fellowship of high hours of privilege. "There assembled at Jerusalem much people to keep the feast of unleavened bread in the second month, a very great congregation."

But many of them, owing to the ignorance and irregularity in religious practice at that period, had not performed the proper ceremonies according to the ritual which would enable

them to participate worthily in the feast of the Passover. "There were many in the congregation that had not sanctified themselves. A multitude of the people from Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun had not cleansed themselves." Then Hezekiah, as a good broad-churchman, offered that prayer which showed that he esteemed mercy more than sacrifice, honesty of purpose more than all burnt-offerings.

Hear this great forerunner of the One who has forever exalted the Spirit above the letter! He felt in that far-off time that the reverent intention of the soul is more than all conformity to ritual. "Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, The good Lord pardon every one that setteth his heart to seek God, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary." We may be sure that this prayer was heard and answered, for "the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah and healed the people."

"The main theme of the author of Chronicles was the importance of the Temple, its ritual and its ministers. Here he suggests, incidentally, perhaps unconsciously, that which is specially significant as coming from an ardent ritualist, namely, the necessary limitations of uniformity in ritual. Hezekiah's great passover was full of irregularities. It was held in the wrong month. It was prolonged to twice the usual period. There were among the worshipers multitudes of ceremonially unclean persons whose presence at these services ought to have been visited with terrible punishment. But all is condoned on the grounds of spiritual emergency and the ritual laws are set aside without consulting the ecclesiastical officials." The king comes up from the duties of secular life with that roundabout common sense which sometimes seems to be withheld from high-and-dry ecclesiastics, intent upon making plain the fact that ritual was made for man and not man for ritual.

In what splendid contrast does his broad-minded action

stand out when set beside the narrow scruples of those chief priests and Pharisees who were intent upon putting Jesus Christ to death upon the cross at another feast of the Passover! We read in the fourth Gospel that these "conscientious objectors" when Jesus was led under arrest to Pilate's judgment hall "went not in lest they should be defiled and might not eat the passover." They could hound holy innocence to its death upon the cross of a felon and wag their heads in scorn when he hung there dying between two thieves, but they could not venture within a Roman Court of Law lest their holy feet should suffer defilement and make them unfit to share in the sacred feast of the Jewish Church.

When this wise and good king came to the throne he found his work cut out for him. There were heathen altars in every corner of Jerusalem. There were high places of idolatry in every city of Judah. The Temple services had ceased and the Temple had been closed. The lamps had been put out and the sacred vessels cut in pieces. "Sixteen years of licensed and protected idolatry had fostered all that was vile in the country, had put wicked men in authority and created vested interests of evil which were now strongly intrenched."

The king felt that if he could restore the rightful worship of God he could at the same time restore a right life to the people. He would open the temple with this notable celebration of the feast of the Passover. He would seek to awaken the national conscience and to re-establish a corporate sense of responsibility by this commanding observance. The opening of the doors of the Temple would be a sign that Jehovah was invited to return to a penitent people and to again manifest his presence among those who were bent upon the amendment of their lives.

It was a great occasion—nothing like it had been seen at Jerusalem for three hundred years. The attendance was

large and the feeling deep and warm. The men of Israel from the northern kingdom stood once more beside the men of Judah in the southern kingdom before the God of their fathers. The cold-hearted and the scornful were by the spiritual contagion of those days shamed into silence or quickened into a participating interest.

There are "tides of the spirit." Now and then there is a tide in the affairs of a church or in the religious life of a nation which taken at the flood leads on to fortune. Omitted, all its future efforts are bound in shallows and in miseries. This was flood-tide in the Jewish Church and the wise king knew how to take the current when it served.

He had his faults like the rest of us, but he was well-nigh perfect in the absoluteness of his loyalty to Jehovah. Here he had no mental reservations; he made no moral compromises. He loved the Lord his God with all his heart and him only would he serve.

And what is real religion but just that, the dedication of the best we have to the highest we see! It was so in Judea when Hezekiah stood at the head of the life of his nation. It is so today in the United States of America when Woodrow Wilson guides the destines of this broad land.

Chapter XXIV

THE GOOD REIGN OF A GOOD KING

2 Chron. 34

"Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign." He began early and he began right. "While he was yet young he began to seek after the God of David his father." He was brought up in the way that a child should go and when he was old he did not depart from it.

He lived in what Bismarck would have called "a day of blood and iron." War was a trade and the trade held in highest esteem. Babylon had just won her mighty independence. Nineveh was tottering toward a downfall. In the west Corinth was ruled by a tyrant. Draco had written in letters of blood his famous code with its long list of crimes punishable by death. The day for instruction, persuasion and moral appeal to show themselves regnant was not yet. We might expect that even this good king would work with the tools at hand. And when he reached his maturity he wrought "with sword and torch," with the arm of force and the hand of compulsion.

He was "the son of Amon," whom the Hebrew historians unite in calling the man who broke the record as the wickedest king who ever ruled in Jerusalem. This Amon sat up nights thinking of yet more disgraceful ways of being wicked. His foul excesses became at last so disgusting that his own courtiers turned upon him and assassinated him. Then some of his friends assassinated the assassins until the hands of all hands were stained with blood. What an inheritance of bad

blood and of baffling problems to be left to a young prince who came to the throne at the age of eight!

But the achievements of this good king furnish us a full-page illustration of the splendid truth that an evil inheritance need not bring defeat to any life. "Blood tells," but it does not tell everything. Heredity is a potent factor in human development, but its results are subject to modifications at the hands of other forms of energy yet more potent. One's ancestors may have loaded the dice against him, but like Josiah of old, the young life may under wholesome guidance begin early to load those dice on the other side in such fashion as to secure moral equilibrium for the years of maturity.

The greatest earthly ally which the young prince had in his quest for righteousness is here set down—"His mother's name was Jedidah," which means "the Beloved." We have at once a vision of winsome tenderness and womanly devotion which became a mighty offset to the evil influence of that wicked father. Not all great men have had great fathers, but can you name a truly great man who had not a great mother?

What an honor roll the names would make in some eleventh chapter of Hebrews written by a feminine hand! Hannah, the mother of Samuel, and Mary, the mother of Jesus! Monica, the mother of Augustine, and Susannah, the mother of the Wesleys! Betsey, the mother of Dwight L. Moody, and Nancy, the mother of Abraham Lincoln! How they projected their influence for good into the life of the race! The spiritual achievement of a godly woman who is indeed "a mother in Israel," regardless of her race connections, is beyond estimate. Such women become Messianic in the scope of the blessings they bring, for in their work for righteousness all the nations of the world are blessed.

"He did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in the ways of David his father." Josiah had more

than one father. He was "the son of Amon" after the flesh, but he was the "son of David" in his moral purpose. "Heredity is not number one to number two—it is from the first to the last. All the kings live in the last king. We are one humanity. Solidarity has its lessons as well as individuality. We know not which of our ancestors comes up in us at this moment or that—now the tiger, now the eagle, now the praying mother, now the daring sire, now some mean soul that got into the current, now the cunning deceiver, now the hero that never had a fear." What a responsibility therefore to stand for good or ill as one link in this endless chain!

In his early life Josiah gave his strength to the development of a personal character which would stand the test and to the gaining of a deeper knowledge of the God of his fathers. He became king when he was eight years old and in his boyhood "he turned not aside to the right hand or the left." Then in his sixteenth year "while he was yet young he began to seek after the God of David his father." In those years of adolescence there came a deepening of his religious experience.

When he reached the age of twenty, "in the twelfth year of his reign he began to purge Jerusalem." He made two notable achievements—he cleaned up the capital city of the land he ruled and he repaired the place of worship.

He found the places and the methods of worship foul and degrading. There were altars erected to lust. There were the lewd objects of an unclean nature-worship offending the eyes and the hearts of those who turned their feet into ways which were meant to be sacred. There was the practice of ceremonial fornication claiming the divine sanction for its own dissolute ways. The head of the nation was fast becoming a cage of unclean beasts and the heart a den of creeping things.

Josiah came upon the scene, a young man of twenty whose heart was aflame with honest purpose and spiritual enthusiasm.

He was a veritable John the Baptist. His fan was in his hand for the purging of the threshing floor. He would gather out the chaff and burn it with an unquenchable fire. He would lay his ax at the root of the tree and every tree which failed to bring forth good fruit would be hewn down.

"They broke down the altars of the Baalim in his presence. He hewed down the sun images which were on high above them. Asherim and the molten images he broke in pieces and made dust of them and strewed it upon the graves of those that had sacrificed to them. He burned the bones of the priests upon their altars and purged Judah and Jerusalem."

He believed in what the Puritans of New England called "the policy of thorough." He had no use for any "half-way covenant," for any moral compromises with that which was evil, for any winking at practices which had uttered their own condemnation by the direfult results they had wrought. He went to the root of the matter in searching out the sources of the lowered moral tone of the land he ruled. He found it in their unclean worship of that which was in no sense divine. And in his thoroughgoing reformation of the whole religious cultus of the country he did not leave even so much as twelve baskets full of evil paraphernalia to perpetuate the influence of that unwholesome practice. He burned it all in the fire.

His other great achievement lay in the restoration of the temple. "When he had purged the land he sent Shaphan to repair the house of the Lord." He arranged for a great free-will offering. He delivered the money which was brought into the house of the Lord into the hands of the workmen who had oversight of the house of the Lord and the workmen gave it to amend and to repair the house.

When the place of worship is allowed to fall into disrepair it becomes an open reproach to the community itself and a

speaking testimony to the lowered spiritual tone of the whole vicinage. When the little country church needs paint without and within, when the panes of glass are broken and the shutters are crippled and flapping, when the carpet is worn through like the hide of some half-starved animal and the pulpit gives the grand hailing sign of distress, when the hymn-books are dirty and dog-eared and all the appointments of worship in the sere and yellow leaf, there issues a loud call for some group of Josiahs to take hold in the name of reverence and community feeling alike and restore the house of the Lord.

In that ancient city the carpenters and the builders came together. Timber was cut and stones were hewn for the restoration of God's house to its former dignity and beauty. "And the men did the work faithfully," the records says. They made this work of restoration an expression of the best they had in material, in workmanship and in high-hearted devotion to those larger interests which have to do with national well-being. Josiah had swept away the foul and unnatural objects of worship and now with clean hands and pure hearts he caused the people to ascend into the hill of the Lord. They stood once more in a sacred place to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

The most significant event in the life of this good king came in the eighteenth year of his reign when he was twenty-six years old. In connection with his work of repairing the temple there came the report of the discovery of a mysterious book. "Hilkiah the priest said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord. And Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan and Shaphan carried the book to the king."

What was this famous book? It was not of great age—it was easily read to the king by this Scribe as would not have

been the case had the book been eight hundred years old as some have maintained. The book was of no great size for it seems to have been read through twice after the greater portion of that day had already been consumed in attention to other matters. The book was undoubtedly preserved, coming to the king's notice as it did at this late date in the history of Israel, and it must therefore be contained in our Old Testament.

"It has long been held that this book was some part of the book which we call Deuteronomy. It can hardly be the whole of that book which shows traces of later expansion. The central chapters, the kernel of the book, culminating in the great chapters of blessings and curses, is precisely the book to answer all the requirements. It is eminently a book of instruction; it contains statutes and ordinances; it can be read in a short time; it is written in the style of personal appeal such as must go to the heart of an impressionable hearer; it contains threats of judgment and ends with a frightful denunciation of Yahweh's curse upon those who disobey."

The book of Deuteronomy is commonly regarded as one of the three greatest books of the Old Testament, sharing with Isaiah and the Psalms that high level of distinction. It was probably written by some brave, prophetic soul at about this period of Israel's religious development. The sanction of the great name of Moses was claimed to add to the weight of its authority. It was probably placed in the temple (where the author knew it would ere long be discovered) in order to add something of sacred sentiment to the power of its appeal.

Let the book speak for itself! Its message to the age of Josiah and to all the ages since is full of power. The really great books live because they have the right to live by being what they are. Books cannot be bolstered up by the big names of big authors unless the books are big in themselves.

Nor will books be allowed to die because the authors are unknown if they have something to say which the world needs to hear.

Books cannot be written up or written down by the wise or unwise things reviewers may say about them. They can only be written up or written down by what is written in them. Men are not much interested today in what was written one hundred years ago about Isaiah and John but they are deeply interested in Isaiah and John. One hundred years from now men will not be greatly interested in some of the technical monographs which are being written today about the "Dual Authorship of Isaiah" or the "Problem of the Fourth Gospel" but they will still be interested in Isaiah and John.

The hour cometh and now is when literary and historical criticism will be appraised at its true value—and in my judgment its value is high—but a yet higher place will be reserved for the man whose pure heart gives him spiritual insight, whose competent scholarship is supplemented by a precious discernment of that inner message to the souls of men, whose knowledge can rightly divide the word of truth separating the local from the universal, the passing from the permanent to the end that the deeper meaning of this ancient literature may make men wise unto salvation and furnish them thoroughly for all good work.

The man who has "found the book," the book within the book which is not so much paper and ink but made up of those elements which are vital, will find also that this inner content will find the people. It will find them at deeper levels of their being than will the words of any other book. It will search out those unconfessed needs which have been waiting for some sure message of help. It will replenish the hearts of men with fresh stores of spiritual impulse destined to carry them triumphantly in the way of duty.

We are grateful to those men who are able as a result of their discriminating study and trained insight to bring us "the words which are spirit and life," the wholesome food of comfort, of uplift, of instruction in righteousness here contained in that book of the law which is to be found in every house of God.

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